ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Social Sciences

MHI-101
ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

– इन्दिरा गांधी

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

- Indira Gandhi

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

MHI-101

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

Expert Committee

Prof. Rashmi Sinha
Director
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Najaf Haider
Centre for Historical Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Prof. Amar Farooqui
Deptt. of History
University of Delhi, New Delhi

Prof. P. K. Basant
Deptt. of History
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Prof. Sri Krishna (Retd.)
Deptt. of History
Indira Gandhi University, Rewari, Haryana

Prof. Arvind Sinha (Retd.)
Centre for Historical Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Prof. Vishwamohan Jha
Deptt. of History
ARSD College, University of Delhi, Delhi

Dr. Vasudha Pandey (Retd.)
Deptt. of History
Lady Sri Ram College, University of Delhi, Delhi

Dr. Meena Bhargava (Retd.)
Deptt. of History
Indraprastha College, University of Delhi, Delhi

Prof. Swaraj Basu
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof Abha Singh
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences,IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. S. B. Upadhyay
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Mr. Ajay Mahurkar
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. Mayank Kumar
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. Harshbardhan Singh Tomar
Faculty of History
School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Course Coordinator

Prof. Swaraj Basu

Content, Format and Language Editing

Prof. Swaraj Basu

Course Preparation Team

Unit No.	Course Writer	Unit No.	Course Writer
1	Prof. P. K. Basant Deptt. of History Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi	2, 3	Prof. Shirin Ratnagar (Retd.) Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
4, 5, 6	Prof. Amar Farooqui Deptt. of History University of Delhi, New Delhi	7, 8	Dr. D. Manjit Department of History Dayal Singh College University of Delhi, New Delhi
9	Prof. Ajay Dandekar Shiv Nadar University Greater Noida, Uttarpradesh	10, 22	Dr. G. R. Malik (Retd.) Deptt. of History Indira Gandhi University, Rewari, Haryana

11	Dr. Saleem Kidwai (Retd.) Department of History Ramjas College, University of Delhi, New Delhi	12	Prof. Madhavi Thampi (Retd.) Department of East Asian Studies University of Delhi, New Delhi
13	Prof. Harbans Mukhia (Retd.) Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	14, 15	Prof. Bodhisattva Kar Deptt. of Historical Studies University of Capetown
16, 17	Prof. Sushil Chaudhury (Retd.) Deptt. of Islamic History and Culture University of Calcutta, Kolkata	18, 19	Dr. Amrit Kaur Basra Deptt. of History Delhi College of Arts and Commerce University of Delhi, New Delhi
20, 21, 23	Prof. Sri Krishna (Retd.) Deptt. of History Indira Gandhi University, Rewari, Haryana	24	Prof. Arvind Sinha (Retd.) Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Acknowledgement: This course is a revised version of our earlier M. A. course, Ancient and Medieval Societies. We acknowledge the contribution made by Prof. A. R. Khan as course coordinator and Prof. M. G. S. Narayanan, Prof. Harbans Mukhia, Prof. Savitri Vishvanathan, Prof. Shirin Ratnagar, Prof. Brij Tankha, Prof. S. K. Sullery, Prof. Kumkum Roy, Dr. Nalini Taneja, Prof. P. K. Basant, Prof. Kapil Kumar, Prof. Ravindra Kumar, Prof. Salil Misra in designing and development of the pre-revised course on Ancient and Medieval Societies.

Cover Design : Sandeep Maini

PRINT PRODUCTION

Mr. Tilak Raj
Assistant Registrar
MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

May, 2023

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2023

ISBN: 978-93-5568-797-5

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Further Information on Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068 or visit University website http://www.ignou.ac.in.

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi by the Registrar, MPDD, IGNOU.

Laser Typeset by: Raj Printers, A-9, Sector B-2, Tronica Ciety, Loni (Gzb.)

Printed at: Hi-Tech Graphics, F-28/3, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Contents

Unit No.		Page No.
Unit 1	Early Human Societies	9
Unit 2	Bronze Age Civilizations I	24
Unit 3	Bronze Age Civilizations 2	40
Unit 4	The Persian Empire	54
Unit 5	Ancient Greece	67
Unit 6	The Roman Empire	83
Unit 7	Latin America	98
Unit 8	Africa	112
Unit 9	Nomadic Empires	127
Unit 10	The Late Roman World	142
Unit 11	The Arab World	159
Unit 12	China	182
Unit 13	Debates on Feudalism	193
Unit 14	Feudalism: Forms, Structures and Phases	205
Unit 15	Trade and the Decline of Feudalism	218
Unit 16	Oceanic Trade	229
Unit 17	Business Communities	244
Unit 18	Commercial Practices	261
Unit 19	Craft Production	274
Unit 20	Science and Technologies and Expansion of Knowledge	285
Unit 21	Religious Establishment	298
Unit 22	Urbanism	311
Unit 23	Technologies of Warfare and Communication	326
Unit 24	Transition to Modern World	337

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course on Ancient and Medieval Societies has been conceived and developed to help learners in understanding the evolution of world civilizations. The course should be seen as history of humanity rather than of individual societies and specific regions. The developments, which have taken place from the earliest times to the end of the period covered, are a legacy of human endeavours in different regions at varying periods. The growth and development of all societies has also not been linear on a determined path in a specified time frame. Different modes of production, ways of life and features of material culture have co-existed throughout the long history not only across regions but also within a given region. Hunting gathering cultures co-existed with pastoral nomadism and sedentary agricultural societies sharing the resources within and across regions. Glorious urban civilizations flourished surrounded by hunting-gathering and nomadic groups. Onward march of human development cannot be ascribed to a particular society or region. It is a result of regular interaction and diffusion of ideas and material cultures across regions and societies. We would not like to grade different regions or societies in terms of their contributions in the overall development of humanity. However, there are certain defining features and discoveries which decisively influenced the course of human development irrespective of the regions of their origin or first occurrence. During the early phase of human development prior to the rise of civilizations one can include: i) manufacture and use of tools, ii) discovery of fire, iii) domestication and breeding of animals, iv) domestication of plants and beginning of agriculture, v) use of metals, vi) development of language and script, and vii) beginning of exchange and trade. With the rise of civilizations the pace of development and change quickened and the contributions of various societies are known with some amount of certainty which we will explain in this course.

This course is having 24 Units and here we will give an idea about each Unit that you are going to learn. Every Unit is like a lesson developed around specific theme and divided into sections and subsections to facilitate better understanding of specific theme. **Unit 1** discusses about early human societies. Beginning with the evolution of modern humans the homo sapiens sapiens, the difference of humans from animals and then the invention of tools and discovery of fire familiarize you with the process of change in early human societies. Development of kinship system, barter and exchange with different groups, use and development of language and practicing arts discussed here give you a brief outline of the process of changes in human society. This will be followed by an account of hunting-gathering cultures, pastoral nomadism, beginning of agriculture leading to sedentary ways of life. **Units 2** and **3** introduce you to transformation in human life under the Bronze Age Civilizations. Bronze Civilization is characterized by urbanization, writing and enumeration, large population, stratified social structure, long distance trade, etc. We shall take a brief look at the Bronze Age societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia (India-Pakistan) and China. They are important not only in terms of the historical transformations that brought them into being, but also because, to some extent, the roots of the culture traditions of their respective regions lie in the Bronze Age. **Unit 4** is devoted to the study of the Persian Empire. This was one of most extensive empires and included most of West Asia, Anatolia and Egypt. In the Persian Empire we focused on administrative organization, system of coinage, growth of language and a tolerant religious ethos. The empire flourished for almost 200 years and declined after the attack by Alexander the great (331 BC). In **Units 5** and **6** you will learn about the Greek Civilization and the Roman Empire. **Unit 5** deals with the study of ancient Greece. The pattern of development of Greece is an exception to the age of empires because it is a centre of great civilization but did not develop into an empire. It did not have a centralized political authority and territorial state. We have discussed the extant of this civilization from around 2000 BC to 338 BC, the end of the classical period. Specific features covered in this Unit are transition to democracy, establishment of democratic political structure, conflict with Persia, use of slave labour and the Greek philosophical thought. **Unit 6** provides brief account of the Roman Empire from around 500 BC to the beginning of the Christian era. We will discuss the political structure, society, different social orders, their powers, privileges and conflicts, the functioning of the republic and extensive use of slave labour. **Unit 7** will introduce you to the study of Latin America. As it is not possible to cover all civilizations flourished in this region so we will focus only on Mayas, Incas and Aztecs. We have learnt about these civilizations from extensive archaeological excavations. They had widespread human settlements with a pattern of habitation. In each of these we will take note of the polity, economy and some aspects of social and cultural life. In **Unit 8** we will familiarize you with the history of Africa. Africa is a wide spread geographic region with a large number of societies that flourished through the ages. Of these Egyptian civilization is most widely researched and documented. You will study about polity, society and economy of North Africa, South Africa and West Africa. **Unit 9** will provide you important developments pertaining to the Nomadic Empires. You will get an idea about the geographic setting and conditions leading to the establishment of Nomadic Empires, chronologies of the empires and also an understanding of the empires. In **Unit 10** we will discuss about the Late Roman World. We will focus on state, society, economy and religion during the late Roman World and how the mighty Roman Empire got divided. You will learn about the emergence of Christianity in the Eastern Roman Empire, its progress through hostility and persecution and its adoption as the state religion of the empire. **Unit 11** will introduce you to the Arab World. You get a brief account of the society and state of the religions before the rise of Islam, rise of Islam and Mohammad as head of the Islamic state. This Unit also explores the spread of Islam beyond Arabia and the rule of Umayyads and Abbasids. **Unit 12** will give you an account of the state, society and religion in China. You will find that State in China had a remarkable continuity for more than a thousand years and bureaucracy played important role in running the state. Chinese society was predominantly agrarian and centred around family and clan. In religious life Taoism and Buddhism co-existed with each other in a harmonious way and Confucianism became a dominant philosophy. Feudalism has complex history of evolution and beyond economy it influenced polity and society. It is European in its origin and is essentially Europe centred. **Units 13 and 14** will focus on the debates on feudalism dealing with the meaning of the term to the origins, nature and consequences of feudalism as mode of production. You will also be introduced to the structure and dominant features of feudalism. **Unit 15** will explore the decline of feudalism. The decline of feudalism has often been attributed to the grooming role of trade, mercantile activities and rise of commercial towns. In **Unit 16** we have discussed Oceanic Trade. Here the pattern and nature of maritime trade from 7th century to mid 18th century has been analyzed. The Arabs were ousted from their dominant position by the Portuguese in Indian Ocean. A brief account of the trading activities of medieval Europe has also been provided. You will also learn about the activities of European trading companies in India and the Indian maritime trade and overseas trade of Indian merchants. **Unit 17** deals with Business Communities. The trade of medieval period was dominated by Armenians and Jews in a number of regions. Besides them there were also Karimis, Venetian, Chinese and Indian merchants. You will get an idea of operation of oceanic trade and various trading networks. **Unit 18** focuses on commercial practices of medieval trading world. Markets and fairs as centres of commercial activity are discussed in detail. Credit and money lending played a crucial role in the commercial transaction. For large scale transactions the instruments of exchange and banking developed. We have discussed all these along with the role of merchants. **Unit 19** is devoted to Craft Production. During the medieval period craft production scaled new heights. Europe dominated in the area of woolen textiles while India in cotton textiles. In the area of pottery and porcelain manufacturing China dominated. In the areas of mining and metallurgy several countries excelled. Organization of production has been discussed. The Unit ends with a discussion on the working conditions of craftsmen. **Unit 20** will focus on Science and Technology and expansion of knowledge. One of the important features of the researches in science was the emphasis on fusion of empiricism and rationalism which established primacy of observation and experimentation. The church and clergy resented the scientific knowledge as it debunked the theological world view. The most important development was the application of technology used in one craft to the other. The communication network vastly improved through the construction of roads, bridges, canals and new navigational devices. Paper and printing revolutionized learning. In **Unit 21** we will discuss the changes in the religious establishment. Here we mainly focus on the Church in Europe.. In 16th -17th centuries the Church experienced major changes which greatly influenced the process of transition of the medieval world. The process started with the demand for reforms in the Church and culminated in the rise of Protestantism. Catholic Counter Reformation was a serious attempt to check the rising tide of the Protestantism. Some thinkers believed that Protestantism created a new ethic which promoted capitalist development. **Unit 22** will focus on the phenomenon of urbanism and growth of towns and cities. You will learn about the extent of urbanization and specific characteristics of urban centres which separated them from countryside. We have also analyzed socio-economic and administrative structure of medieval towns. In **Unit 23** we will discuss the technologies of warfare and communication. Medieval period witnessed a remarkable change in the use of arms and methods of warfare. The large scale use of gunpowder completely altered the methods of offence and defence in the war. The use of gun powder and cannons changed the tactics of war at sea also. The new technology meant that wars were now much more deadly resulting in more casualties. Use of technology enabled Europe to establish its supremacy from medieval period onwards. **Unit 24,** last unit of this course, we will analyze the process of the transition of the medieval world to the modern world. Explaining the meaning of the modern world this explores the process of transition in three broad areas: i) transformation of political structure, ii) affect of trading activities, and iii) cultural transformation. The regions under focus are Europe, China in East Asia and the Arab World. You will notice that the decentralized political structures transformed into centralized states in Europe and other parts of the world. In the area of trade new sea routes are discovered giving rise to discovery of America and faster communication between Europe and Asia. The developments in the realm of science, religion and society greatly helped in transformation. An attempt has been made to analyze the question of the triumph of Europe in the process of transition.

Hope you will enjoy studying this course and get idea of evolution and development of ancient and medieval societies. This will familiarize you with the broad contours of major world civilizations. This course will make you to;

- Think critically about the development of people politically, economically, socially and culturally;
- Evaluate evolution of different civilizations and their impact;
- Analyze issues of political, social and economic transformation, cultural negotiation, development of scientific temperament; and
- Explore the transition between Ancient and Medieval societies.

UNIT 1 EARLY HUMAN SOCIETIES

Structure

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Sources of Study

1.3 Origins of Humans

  1.3.1 Modern Humans (*Homo Sapiens Sapiens*)

  1.3.2 How are Humans Different from Animals?

1.4 Invention of Tools and Discovery of Fire

1.5 Kinship

  1.5.1 How did Kinship Emerge?

  1.5.2 When did Kinship Emerge?

1.6 Exchange

1.7 Invention of Arts and Language

1.8 Hunter-Gathers – What Can We Learn from Them?

1.9 The Great Transformation

1.10 Pastoral Nomadism

1.11 Agriculture

1.12 Consequences of Agriculture

  1.12.1 Birth of Village Culture

  1.12.2 Increase in Population and Expansion of Settlements

  1.12.3 Emergence of Tribal Communities

  1.12.4 New Epidemics and Diseases

  1.12.5 New Forms of Order and Disputes

1.13 Summary

1.14 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We know from various sources that about 3000 million years ago life on earth began and gradually from a simple cell form life developed into complex living beings in thousand of species. Till about the end of the 18th century it was believed that all life on earth has existed as it is since the beginning of life and that all life including plants and animals was the creation of God in this form. But since late 18th and early 19th century scientists began to argue that the nature and life have changed over millions of years. With the help of archaeological findings and anthropological researches it can be said that modern humans have had many ancestors with common biological characteristics. Scholars who are trying to discover evidences for Adam's ancestors in the plains of Africa have to begin with a definition of human beings. They need a definition of humans not only in anatomical terms but in cultural and philosophical terms as well. That is not easy. Answers have been given by religious traditions and philosophers (humans having souls or the capacity to think), biologists (homo-sapiens evolved from primitive hominids), anthropologists (human beings are tool making animals or that human beings have language and art). The whole question of human evolution has two aspects, biological evolution and socio-cultural evolution. History witnessed the development of different cultures and societies in all parts of the world. You may be interested to know how people in these early cultures acquired their food, how they lived, what sort of technology was used, how their society was organized, what were their belief system and other aspects of material culture.

In this Unit, we propose to present a review of the developments of human cultures, from the origin of humans to the stage of settled agriculture and sedentary societies. In this Unit, we wish to synthesize all the developments. We hope this Unit will help you in understanding the development of human societies in a proper perspective.

1.2 SOURCES OF STUDY

The past which has been reconstructed belongs to an era when our ancestors did not know writing. Historians have learnt about our ancestors by studying bones, and stone tools of those times. Archaeology has borrowed from almost every discipline of science to decipher the meaning of objects from the past. A typical excavation team today consists of a network of scholars who will examine human and animal bones (medical and veterinary sciences), plants (botanists) and use radio carbon dating (physicists). To be able to understand the meaning of things, historians have learnt from the insights provided by studies of foraging societies surviving in the modern times. The study of contemporary foraging people whom we assume to be living in environments and patterns similar to our ancestors helps us understand the pre–literate past better. Studies of the Kung Bushmen carried out by anthropologists like R.B. Lee have given us many insights about the hunting–gathering mode of life. One new area of research which has helped historians is the study of the non-human primates. Scholars like Jane Goodall have studied the behaviour of chimpanzees in the wild. Earlier it was believed that humans were the only tool using animals. Goodall has shown that chimpanzees too use tools. It is in the mists of this past that some of the greatest landmarks of human history are hidden. We shall deal with some of the turning points in human history.

1.3 ORIGINS OF HUMANS

Humans originated in Africa. Our earliest known ancestors are called Australopithecus. Remains of the Australopithecines, have been found in fossils dating from about 2-4 million years ago at such sites as Laetoli in Tanzania and Hadar in Ethiopia. Analysis of skeletal material (of which the famous Lucy, discovered at Hadar, is an example), plus amazing footprints preserved in volcanic ash at Laetoli, shows that Australopithecus walked bipedally. Guess what was their height about 3.8 feet–shorter than many eleven year olds of our times. How could such ape like creatures be called our ancestors? This is because among the animals of his kind humans alone walks on two feet. Other animals walk on all four. The bones of this ape like creature show that it walked on two feet. Except for their bipedal gait these Australopithecines probably looked a lot like modern chimps. It now appears that several different species of Australopithecines lived for a period of 2 million years or more in east and southern Africa. The diet of the Australopithecines consisted largely of gathered plant foods.

Experts do not agree as to which kind of Australopithecine was the ancestor of the next important fossil hominid, Homo habilis. The latter appeared around 2 million years ago in east and southern Africa. The brain of *H. habilis* showed a definite increase in size over Australopithecus. H. habilis made stone tools, Early Human Societies some of which were undoubtedly used to butcher meat. They subsisted on plant food and meat, which they scavenged. H. habilis is considered ancestral to *H. erectus*, who appeared in Africa about 1.5 million years ago. In the next million years our ancestors moved out of Africa. Their remains have been found in China, Java and Europe. *H. erectus* showed a further increase in brain size and left evidence of more advanced tools, hunting of large animals, and use of fire. When our ancestors became non-vegetarians they tapped a new source of food energy. Animals like deer converted vegetation often not consumed by humans into meat. When they hunted migratory birds and animals humans began to draw food nutrients from a wide range of resources. Animals migrating from places far off were bringing food supplies from areas which lay beyond the range of human groups.

H. erectus lived for about 1 million years. About 350,000 years ago appeared another species called the Neanderthal man. They were short, stocky and had powerful physique. Nevertheless they too were not quite human. They used stone tools alright but they did not have language or art.

Our environment was shaped by natural forces which in turn shaped our evolutionary path. Nature created different kinds of environments like – hot or cold weather conditions, dry deserts or wet river valleys, sea coasts and mountains. Temporal variants produce changes and modifications some of which led to evolutionary changes.

1.3.1 Modern Humans (*Homo Sapiens Sapiens*)

The fully modern humans (*homo sapiens sapiens* meaning the thinking humans) are present in the Klaiser River mouth caves in South Africa from 120,000 – 60,000 years ago. Theories based on DNA also support the idea of the African origins of humans about 200,000 years ago. They appeared in the West Asia around 90, 000 years ago. Earlier, our ancestors like the *Homo-erectus* and the Neanderthals had colonised areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, China and Europe. There were plenty of places in the globe where they had not reached. Siberia, Australia and the whole vast breath of the Americas remained untouched. Modern humans through their greater adaptability to climate managed to colonise every part of the globe where it is possible for humans to live. Moving out of Africa about 120000 thousand years ago they had reached Australia 60,000 years ago and America about 20,000 years ago. Many scholars believe that differences in skin colour, and body size belong to this age.

Modern humans seem to have introduced a range of innovations which are unique to humans. Some of these advances were art (e.g. paintings in Lascaux, France, ivory horse from Vogelherd, Germany), invention of new tools and tailored clothing.

The European examples which have been carefully studied show that the *Homo sapiens sapiens* appeared in that area in the interglacial period. This period was relatively warm and provided favourable conditions and niches for the early humans to evolve. These humans were carrying the knowledge acquired by their ancestors. They controlled fire and built shelters for themselves. These innovations gave them the flexibility to colonise new areas by adapting to changing conditions. With their improved weapons they were able to hunt down big game and exploit marine resources. All this indicates that by this time culture and acquired knowledge began to out pace simple biological adaptation.

1.3.2 How are Humans Different from Animals?

We have selected six defining characteristics of humans which make them different from other animals – 1) Humans make tools and eat uncooked as well as cooked food. 2) Humans have a large kinship system consisting of relatives by descent and marriage. This means that unlike other animals they have added social relationships to biological relationship in the web of kinship. 3) Humans barter and exchange with other human communities. 4) Humans communicate through a highly developed language. 5) Humans have invented arts. 6) Human communities grow food.

We shall try to trace the acquisition of these characteristics by our ancestors. Our reading of the past suggests that these characteristics were acquired in different periods of history. The other equally interesting fact is that the changes were not incremental in nature. There were large periods of very slow development followed by a period of rapid development.

1.4 INVENTION OF TOOLS AND DISCOVERY OF FIRE

Tool making is considered a defining feature of the humankind. Although some other animals like chimpanzees and crows are known to use tools, they do it rarely and in an episodic fashion. They do not shape their tools either. Australopithecines were probably the first tool makers. The earliest tools might have been made of bone or wood. They have not survived to the present. The earliest tools were probably made by women to make gathering more efficient. In addition, women devised containers to facilitate the transportation of gathered food and for hauling infants during gathering. About 2.5 million years ago our ancestors discovered that stone could be used as weapons. With stone tools they could kill animals and break shells of edible seeds. Tool making by our ancestors marked the beginning of technology. Think of the ways in which technology has made work easier. For example if you needed wood you would not wait for a tree to fall down but simply cut it with a saw. Also technology helps produce more goods. Before the invention of printing press books had to be copied by hand. As such books were rare and expensive. As our technology has changed, our way of life has changed. Just as early technology made it possible to hunt and cook in new ways, so too, the modern technology has made our present day lifestyle possible.

Discovery of Fire

Food can be cooked only if fire is available. The first evidence for fire is found 500,000 years ago at Zhoukoudien cave, China. It is associated with *Homo erectus*. The control of fire is one of the most important developments in human history. By doing so our ancestors could cook food and thus make it more digestible through chemical transformation. For example, starches in roots could be broken down and made easier for complete digestion. Toxins in plants could be destroyed; bacteria and other harmful agents in putrefied meat could be destroyed with heat. In addition, fire allowed expansion into new environments by providing light, warmth, and protection from predators. The potential for environmental change was present if fire was employed to hunt game and to burn plant communities.

1.5 KINSHIP

All human groups regulate marriage and kinship with other groups. Kinship has been defined as the recognition of relationships based on descent and marriage. Relations based on brotherhood or sisterhood is found among the primates. The well known anthropologist R. Fox maintains that the combination of "alliance" with "descent" in one system was a unique human innovation. Simply stated no other species has in-laws. This innovation allowed humans to link up and ally with other groups. By maintaining ties with a son or daughter who moved to another group after marriage, humans created relationship with the group to which the offering had moved.

The most important aspect of kinship is that it is not simply about biological relationship, it is about social relationship. Biological connections are very narrow. Kinship on the other hand, can be extended as far as the local conventions require. In many human communities every known person is treated as a kinsman so that marriages are simply renewals of links that have already existed. With kinship humans could depend on each other in times of food shortage or incursion by a hostile group. This also ensured sharing the knowledge of a large number of groups. Since, it ensures a healthy flow of genes over a large area, communities having kinship would have a greater chance of biological survival and expansion.

1.5.1 How did Kinship Emerge?

R. Fox believes that the emergence of kinship is related to the gradual shift to a non-vegetarian diet. This "hunting transition" was well under way by early *H. erectus*.

This had important consequences for the relationships among the early humans. The large scale hunting of the larger animals might have led to the creation of a more rigid sexual division of labour. This form of hunting required a mobility that would exclude women who were hunting or nursing young children. Foraging could be undertaken by the whole community and fully integrated with other social activities such as singing, chatting and child care. Hunting on the other hand requires stealth and silence and tended to become the preserve of able bodied men.

Men went for hunting, women for gathering. Earlier everyone foraged for himself or herself. With the new sexual division of labour came a need for exchange in food between male and female. This trade changed their relations with each other. Before this time there were all-male associations (as among chimpanzees) and all-female (with young) associations. With the sexual division of labour, however, men and women needed one another in a new way: for food, for the exchange of vegetables and meat. This trade, according to Fox, "is probably at the root of a truly human society." This encouraged the creation of domestic units that would eventually bring together adult males, females and their young. There are two other distinctive features of human kinship. Most human societies practise incest taboo. Humans also invented exogamy, the rule whereby one must marry outside a certain group. Exogamy helped people to make connections with other groups. If a group forbids marriage within itself, it is forced to acquire spouses from other groups. When that happens, harmonious relationships between the groups are promoted by the fact of their interdependency for spouses. This was important to early humans armed with lethal weapons. As groups expanded and bumped into one another, possibly competing for resources, the idea of kinship and marriages could be used to prevent hostilities. Modern ethnography suggests that kinship was tightly interwoven with economics, politics and religion.

1.5.2 When did Kinship Emerge?

It is difficult to write the history of kinship. Fascinating evidence for kinship comes from 17,000 years old settlements on the Kom Ombo plains along the Nile in Egypt. It shows a cluster of settlements of about 25 to 30 people each. Each of these groups made particular kinds of tools and their techniques of food gathering too, were distinctive. Considering the fact that these groups lived in close proximity for a long time, it is likely that kinship connected them all.

Ethnography suggests that one of the major functions of kinship is exchange of humans as well as goods. In the context of the prehistoric past the evidence for exchange can be a pointer to the presence of kinship. That is why we shall examine the evidence for exchange in prehistoric societies.

1.6 EXCHANGE

When Adam Smith wrote that humans have bartered and exchanged from times immemorial he was making a statement about a unique characteristic of the human communities. Unlike other animals' humans barter and exchange goods with outsiders. It is relatively easier to write a history of exchange. This can be judged from the fact that if some objects (stones in this context) are found which are not available locally; one can presume that they have been procured from other communities who live in those areas. Although that, too, will not be true in all cases, this is because we know that hunting-gathering communities are mobile groups. This means that they might have picked up those stones during their seasonal migrations. When our ancestors realised the potential and possibilities of stone for shaping tools, they began looking for stones that could give sharper edge and had longer life. Obsidian is one such stone. But it is a rare type of stone. About 130,000 years ago two sites in Tanzania have yielded evidence for the use of obsidian. This stone had been obtained from Kenya's Central rift valley located at a distance of 300 kilometers. Hunters moved around quite a lot. So, obsidian could have been obtained during a hunting expedition. It is a solitary evidence.

Flint is another stone which our ancestors found useful. Its crystalline texture helps produce sharp and efficient tools. Another stone which was chosen by our ancestors was quartzite. These stones are not available everywhere. Our ancestors tried to get them from distant places. For example it has been found that at the 20,000 year old site of Kostenki in Russia flint tool had been brought from a distance of about 160 km. Based on parallels with modern ethnographic evidence we can assume that these flint stones were procured by the people at Kostenki through a process of exchange. Modern foraging communities periodically gather in one place and exchange women and gift valuables to each other. There is a famous saying, "Gifts make friends and friends make gifts". The available evidence does not permit us to take back the history of exchange of goods earlier than 20,000 BC.

1.7 INVENTION OF ARTS AND LANGUAGE

Probably, the surest characteristic of humans is their ability to speak. Language is unique to humans. Other animals can emit a limited range of sounds. For example a dog barks differently to register its happiness or anger. Other dogs too, understand these sounds. Same is true of all other animals. However, the range of voices produced by them is very limited. In the case of humans the range of meaningful sounds produced by them verges on infinity. Think of the large dictionaries in all the languages of the world. Each word represents a distinct meaningful sound. That is why language is considered unique to humans.

The beginnings of languages are hidden in the mists of the past. Human beings were anatomically ready to speak more than 150,000 years ago. However, unequivocal evidence for language does not appear for the next 100,000 years. For example we know that the modern humans who are found in Europe about 40,000 years ago had a language. This is proved by many related evidences. Anatomically, the arrangement of their oral and nasal cavities, their longer pharynx i.e. the section of throat just above the vocal cords and the flexibility of their tongues would have enabled them to shape and project sounds over a wide range. However, the evidence for this biological capability has to be combined with evidences that would indicate the ability for socially shared meanings. There is no logical relationship between the sounds of a language and the objects signified by them. These sounds are understood because the speakers and listeners have a socially shared meaning for them. Works of art are understandable to a community because it has a mutually understandable meaning for symbols like painting and icons. In short art appears when a group has acquired symbolic thinking. That is why art and language reflect each other. Both involve symbols that are not just the fancies of an individual but creations of a society.

Art is unique to humans. No other animal is known to paint and draw pictures. No other animal is known to understand or appreciate pictures either. Modern humans all over the world have left evidence of their art works. So beautiful are the paintings found in the caves of Lescaux in France and Altamira in Spain that the great twentieth century painter Picasso exclaimed, "We, (modern artists) have invented nothing." The unequivocal traces for art and language found so far are not earlier than 50,000 years.

The invention of arts and language meant the acquisition of the capacity to conceptualise things remote in time or space. Planning, foresight, social organisation, rituals, complex exchange – in short a whole new world of possibilities emerged in its wake. It was these new forms of cooperation, this ability to plan in advance that enabled our ancestors to sweep across the globe in a very short time. It was the invention of language that enabled our ancestors to transmit knowledge to children about things they had not seen. It was the birth of idea and imagination.

1.8 HUNTER-GATHERERS – WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THEM?

Until 12,000 years ago virtually all humanity lived as hunters and gatherers. They stand at the opposite pole from the modern urban life. They have lived in small groups, without centralized authority or standing armies. They have managed to solve their problems without war and without much violence. With relatively simple technology – wood, bone, stone, fibers – they were able to meet their requirements. Instead of the eight hour work schedule of the industrial societies they manage to collect a nutritive diet with two to three hours of work. No wonder the American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins calls them, "the original affluent society". Hunter- gatherers have lived without destroying their environment. We live in societies divided into haves and have-nots. The ten thousand years of agricultural and industrial civilizations have brought us to the brink of environmental disaster. May be the surviving hunting-gathering groups deserve a rethinking. They might have answers to some of the central questions about the human condition – about social life, politics, and gender, about diet and nutrition and living in nature.

A Letter to the President of America

We reproduce extracts from a letter sent to the President of America by a Red Indian chief about 150 years ago. The American President wanted to buy land from the Red Indians. This letter shows the hunter-gatherer's way of looking at nature.

How can you buy or sell sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memory of the Red man.

The White man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the Red man. We are part of this earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers and sisters...

.......We know that the White man does not understand our ways...

He treats his mother the earth, and his brother the sky, as things to be bought, plundered and sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

Let us sum up

Over the last three million years our ancestors learnt many things and there was also a visible change in their appearance. If our ancestors were to be brought to the modern world, he would recognize a deer or monkey. However, not for a moment would he suspect us to be his descendants. Biological changes, changes in stone tool technology, acquisition of language and invention of kinship moved hand in hand with the peopling of the earth. Long before Europeans discovered America and Australia our hunter gatherer ancestors had found routes to those places. About 30,000 years ago humans had the technology to enter and live in the Arctic. No habitat on earth was inaccessible. They had the tools to hunt animals to extinction and to transform whole biomes with fire. They were beginning to transform nature. Our discussion indicates that characteristics we associate with humans emerged over a long period of history. While tool making emerged about two million years ago, language, art, exchange and kinship seem to have emerged in the last two hundred thousand years only. The last characteristic we associate with humans i.e. food production still lay in future. Let us see how it came about.

1.9 THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

The history of *Homo-sapiens sapiens* is one of progressive acquisition of new skills. They learnt to make tools combining wood and stone. They learnt fishing, boating and swimming. It was around this time that the Holocene era began. Weather became warmer causing different kinds of changes across the globe. For example in West Asia dry deserts replaced forests. In Europe on the other hand snow melted away and forests grew. Faced with these climatic changes our foraging ancestors devised new forms of adaptation. These new forms of adaptation moved along four different trajectories. Most of the communities continued their hunting-gathering life. They simply added new marine species and various seeds into their food kitty. In many areas forests and rivers could supply them food in plenty. Also many of these groups preferred the freedom and leisure of the hunting-gathering way of life. That is why even in AD 1500 foragers occupied fully one third of the globe. This included Australia, most of North America, as well as large tracts of South America, Africa, and Northeast Asia. Even today hunter-gatherers live on in forty countries, in the presence of hundreds of thousands of descendants a generation or two removed from a foraging way of life.

In some parts of the world hunter-gatherers began cultivating plants but continued to live like nomadic foragers. Evidences have been found in China and Mexico that plants were cultivated by nomadic foragers. They did not settle down in villages. They continued to thrive in this mixed form of food acquisition for more than two thousand years. So, it cannot be regarded as a transitional stage.

There were two other forms of adaptation to the changes in environment had the potential for the development of human culture. These were pastoral nomadism and agriculture.

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1.10 PASTORAL NOMADISM

Some hunting-gathering communities took up farming and herding of animals. Evidences from West Asia suggest agriculture and animal domestication emerged at nearly the same period. Some communities preferred herding of animals over agriculture. The Central Asian steppes consisting of countries like Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan etc. was an area where herding of animals was the dominant form of living until about three hundred years ago. There are indications for the domestication of dogs, pigs and horses from the Mesolithic period. It was the domestication of cattle, sheep and goat that imposed a new pattern of livelihood on the humans. Pastoralism generated a different lifestyle. The domestication of animals represented a radically new way of life. In the hunting-gathering mode of life animals were killed and consumed immediately. Now animals were reared to act as walking larders that could be used in times of scarcity. Unlike the agriculturists who generally settled down in villages, pastoralists moved from one place to another in search of pastures. Historically the nomadic people lived in the grassy plains of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, where the grasses provided the sustenance for their herds. Pastoral nomadism varied according to the type of domesticated animal chosen as the primary source of livelihood.

Cattle Herders, Horse Nomads and Others

Goat, Sheep and cattle herding was common in West and South Asia and throughout the plains of southern and eastern Africa. Cattle became the basis of wealth for many of these warrior-dominated societies. Hittites, Hyksos, early Greeks, and Aryans were horse nomads. The earliest horse nomads did not ride their animals, but fought from chariots.

Reindeer herding as a form of pastoral nomadism may have developed even before herds were kept on the Eurasian steppes. They were mostly confined to northern Europe and Siberia. These communities were at a distance from the main centres of contemporary civilizations. In Arabia and the areas around Sudan in Africa, camel nomadism became common in the early centuries of the Christian era. Able to subsist on limited water and fodder, camel nomads controlled trade routes that crossed the great Saharan and Arabian deserts. In the Andean highlands in America llamas and alpacas were domesticated and led to a limited pastoralism. Maintenance of herds was critical to the survival of nomadic groups. These animals supplied meat and milk to the nomads. Camels, horses and oxen also helped transport goods from one pasture land to another and to markets.

Modern studies of the nomadic groups in contact with agricultural societies have revealed some of the dynamics of these societies. It has been said that a true nomad is a poor nomad. Wealth is a burden to him. Everything he has must be light enough to be carried, to be set up every evening and to be packed again the next morning. If his herd increases beyond a certain number he is forced to move quickly from one place to another in search of pastures because grazing is exhausted very quickly. The increase in the number of animals hampers movements on the one hand and requires greater mobility on the other. That is why they are forced to get rid of some of their animals by exchanging it with some other goods. If they acquire wealth they cannot carry it. So, they are forced to settle down. Thus rich nomads settle down. Very poor nomads too cannot survive for long. Herds of sheep and goat are prone to infection and can die in large numbers. Herders can suddenly find themselves without any sheep or goat. In that situation they tend to take up jobs with settled communities. This inherent instability of the pastoral nomadic groups dictates its relationship with other pastoral or settled communities. A community suddenly finding itself without its herds can attack neighbouring pastoral or settled communities. Pastoral societies are characterized by the domination of warlike males bound to each other by ties of loyalty. Physical valor and courage are among the most valued attributes. Their mobility gives them significant advantages as warriors, even against the armies of sedentary peoples. Many scholars believe that early states emerged when nomadic groups conquered agricultural communities. Early Mesopotamian literature refers to nomadic groups who created kingdoms. Early Greeks and Aryans were nomadic people who shaped the nature of civilizations in Greece and India. The Hsiung-nu (known as the Huns in the West) destroyed the Roman empire and Indian kingdoms in the fourth- fifth century. The most famous leader of nomadic groups was Changez Khan. In the thirteenth century he created the largest empire hitherto known. Pastoral nomads often destroyed kingdoms in areas where sedentary agriculture was practiced. The capacity of the civilised centers to support vastly greater populations, to develop greater occupational diversity, and to produce lasting institutions has given agriculturists advantage over nomadic peoples. However, the impact of pastoral nomads has been significant in history.

1.11 AGRICULTURE

In places like West Asia, Egypt, India and China climatic changes led to the emergence of farming as the dominant form of living. These people also domesticated animals. However, agriculture was the dominant survival strategy for them. When food production and animal domestication combined as a mode of life it was a revolution. The transition from foraging to farming is one of the turning points in our history. The seasonally mobile life of hunter-gatherers, who obtained their food from wild plants and animals, was replaced by the settled life of farmers, who cultivated crops and raised domesticated livestock. This shift to sedentary life led to the growth of population and village settlement, the development of crafts such as pottery and metallurgy, and eventually to states and cities.

Food production and animal domestication represented a changed outlook for food quest. It represented a planning not for a day but for a season – for the long term. This new agricultural economy expanded at the expense of the old foraging way of life. Slowly and steadily agriculture became the dominant mode of life. Even today it remains the dominant occupation of the majority of humans. Last two hundred years of industrial revolution have reshaped the contours of the world. However, even now in a country like India almost 75% of the people are agriculturists. The soil they work on is an artificial soil fashioned by thousands of years of labour.

1.12 CONSEQUENCES OF AGRICULTURE

The beginning of agriculture and its spread to large parts of the earth had far reaching consequences for the human societies. We discuss a few of these in this section.

1.12.1 Birth of Village Culture

Hunter-gatherers moved their homes according to the seasonal migration of animals and availability of fruits and roots. Unlike hunting-gathering, agriculture requires that the farmer stays in one place for a long period. He has to sow seeds, he has to water the plants and he has to protect the saplings from birds and animals. Only after four to six months are the plants ready for harvesting. This means that unlike hunting-gathering, agriculture encourages settling down in one place. That is why the beginning of agriculture is connected with the emergence of villages. Although, foraging communities founded villages and towns in some places where plentiful supply of food was available all the year round, such places were rare. In domesticating animals and plants humans necessarily domesticated themselves. This world covered with roads and paths, huts and houses, hamlets, villages and towns is a creation of our agricultural ancestors. These are the places archaeologists dig up.

1.12.2 Increase in Population and Expansion of Settlements

Settled agricultural populations tend to expand both numerically and territorially. Population growth is higher among sedentary communities. Crops provided farmers with more dependable supplies of grain based weaning foods such as gruel and porridge, as well as milk, once the goats and sheep began to be milked. The average interval between births would have been reduced, leading to increase in population. It has been estimated that in the Fertile Crescent the size of settlements increased ten fold in the transition to food production. Hunter-gatherers lived in groups of twenty or thirty because large numbers could create food shortages. Farmers could grow more food than hunter-gatherers could collect. They could support more people on small plots of land. Unlike the hunter-gatherers, farmers could grow food which they could store for a long time. Thus, villages with population of hundreds of people came into existence.

The coming of agriculture meant that crops were sown in areas where they did not grow naturally. Thus, there was an artificial extension of the production niche. While hunter-gatherers depended on nature to provide them food, agriculturists actively created new landscapes of cultivated crops. Thus, cultivators colonised many new areas uninhabited in the earlier period. Agriculture also led to an increase in the carrying capacity of land. Various calculations suggest that a hunter-gather would need roughly four square kilometers of land to feed him in a year's time. A very small chunk of land could support large number of agriculturists. However, the coming of agriculture also meant slavery for many people. Chiefs hungry for power and wealth forced other members of the community to take up cultivation and part with a part of the produce.

Domestication of plants is continuing in modern times too. Many of the colourful flowers growing in our gardens were brought from the Himalayas in the twentieth century. Similarly, many plants with medicinal properties have been discovered and domesticated in the present century. Everyday some botanist discovers some useful property in a plant and in many cases such discoveries are followed by growing those plants artificially. Unfortunately, because of the large scale destruction of forests many plants are destroyed even before their medicinal properties are discovered.

1.12.3 Emergence of Tribal Communities

Coming of agriculture is also related to the emergence of long terms patterns of cooperation. Hunting-gathering groups need cooperation for organizing hunt. Once the hunt is over and game has been shared the group ceases to exist. Agriculturists need cooperation from sowing to harvesting. Unlike a typical hunting expedition which might last a day or a week, agriculturists have to cooperate in the production process lasting at least four months. While agriculturists are waiting for the crops to grow, they survive on the food produced by farmers in the previous season. So, there is a need for cooperation among food producing groups across the year. No wonder agricultural societies are characterized by large kinship networks which are the institutional frame for cooperation among the farmers.

1.12.4 New Epidemics and Diseases

The coming of agriculture had some important consequences for the health and hygiene of people. While a regular supply of food seems to have increased their longevity (Australopithecus lived for 25 years only), sedentary life created ideal environments for mosquitoes especially when they started storing water, irrigating crops, or settling near swampy or marshy land. These mosquitoes were the carriers of diseases like malaria. The trash that accumulated around villages attracted pests, some of which were hosts for diseases. A famous, later, example was the medieval spread of bubonic plague through the infestation of rats whose fleas carried the disease.

1.12.5 New Forms of Order and Dispute

Permanent houses meant substantial investments in labour. Similarly, agricultural fields too required a considerable investment of labour. Agricultural communities would defend their fields and homes much more than the foraging groups. In case there is a conflict among foragers the losing side simply leaves the place. Agriculturists tend to stay in their villages even if the victors take away part of their produce or give them a subordinate status. Thus coming of agriculture changed the significance of war. It also paved the way for the creation of societies based on inequality.

1.13 SUMMARY

Humans have lived on earth for more than 2.5 million years. However, they left only scant and equivocal traces. Because the evidence is scanty new excavations can change long held views. We are still unsure about the time when speech, art, kinship or exchange originated. Similar is the case of the consequences of the birth of agriculture. For example the ongoing excavations at Catalhoyuk in Turkey seem to indicate that people numbering in tens of thousands settled down there not for cultivation but for some still mysterious cultural reason (see www.catal.arch.cam.ac.uk/catal/catal.html). There is no inevitability about evolution. All societies need not move along a given technological trajectory. Many communities can be happy being hunter-gatherers. Their developments might be in the direction of the extension of kinship networks and traditions of collective rituals of dancing and singing. However, in the field of technology there have been major changes which have given advantage to some communities in their struggle to wrest a comfortable life from nature. These advances in technology also made it easier to subjugate other human communities.

Some scholars have calculated that the total number of people who have lived on the earth since the coming of the Homo sapiens sapiens is somewhere between 70 to a 100 thousand million. All these people lived on earth, breathing, working and creating the world we have inherited. We are the most successful species on earth. Our control over the life on earth has come at a tremendous cost to other species. As humans became more and more successful hunters they drove many species like mammoths to extinction. This process has accelerated in the wake of the progress of the human civilization. In today's world while the numbers of the homo sapiens grows phenomenally, jungles and wild life are disappearing with even greater rapidity. The debate whether we are fallen angels or risen apes will rage endlessly but we need to remember that the blood flowing in our veins is 99% like those of the chimpanzees. All living species on this earth are at our mercy. We are tied to them by the web of life. Their destruction might prove fatal to us. The sooner we realize it the better.

1.14 EXERCISES

1) Briefly discuss the origin of humans.
2) What lessons we learn from Hunter-gatherers?
3) What is kinship? How did it emerge?
4) What role did language play in the process of human development?
5) Write a short note on Pastoral nomadism.
6) How did agriculture influence the human societies?

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

GLOSSARY

Carrying Capacity	:	The maximum population of a given species thatcan be supported by the food potentiality available to it from the biological resources of an area.
Desiccation	:	A climatic condition that is associated with dryness and lack of moisture.
Diffusion	:	The spread of ideas, traits or people from one area to another.
Ecosystem	:	The total living community of a single environment – the flora, fauna, insects and human beings–and the relationship of the constituent parts as well as their relationship with the non- organic environment.
Ethnography	:	Scientific description of different human races.
Fertile Crescent	:	It is the arc of the fertile land that is covered by the mountains and foothills of Israel, Jordan and Syria to the west, Turkey to the north and Iran to the east.
Holocene	:	The present geological epoch that set in with the end of the Pleistocene epoch.
Hybridization	:	A process of crossbreeding (in this case of cereals).

Loess	One of the wind-blown sediments, silt, which is derived from glacial deposits and is carried long distance before its deposition. Because of its exceptional fertility areas of loess were especially chosen for settlement by early farmers.
Megaliths	Large stone monuments, mostly tombs.
Mesolithic	Relating to the period in prehistory immediately following the Ice Age when people still lived by hunting and food gathering but in some places had begun very basic farming practices.
Morphology	Scientific study of the form and structure of animals and plants.
Necropolis	A large cemetery.
Neolithic	Relating to the New Stone Age or period of prehistoric farming before the introduction of metal- working.
Pleistocene Epoch	A geological beginning about 1.6 million years ago and ending about 10,000 years ago.
Prehistory	The study of the period of history before there were written records.
Reliefs	A three-dimensional carving or sculpture etc., in which features are represented as raised above the general plane.
Slash and Burn	The primitive form of agriculture that is also known as Swidden and shifting cultivation. It is one of the earliest form of cultivation. It consists of the clearance of small forest areas by the burning and cutting down of trees and bushes, followed by the planting of crops in the clearance.
Stock Raising	The breeding and maintenance of animals.
Upper Paleolithic	Relating to that part of the Old Stone Age (Paleolithic) that lasted from approximately 40,000 to 12,000 years ago.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 2 BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATIONS I

Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Egypt, the Gift of the Nile
2.3 Mesopotamia and its Cities
2.4 The Harappan World
2.5 The Shang Civilization of Northern and Central China
2.6 The Use of Copper and Bronze
2.7 Summary
2.8 Exercises

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will introduce you to the cultural and geographical settings of the Bronze Age Civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China and to the use of metals. In 1871, E.B.Tylor suggested that human institutions have succeeded each other in sequence in a substantially uniform way across the world. He suggested that the remarkable similarity of cultures of far flung regions and diverse races was because of the 'uniform action of uniform causes'. Thinking along similar lines, L.H.Morgan, author of the path breaking Ancient Society, thought that parallel developments in the history of the world were largely because the 'germs' of the main institutions of society were present in the early stages of development. In the later nineteenth century systematic excavations began in Egypt, Crete and Mesopotamia. Each of these, in different ways, suggested to Europeans the roots of their own civilization.

Yet it was also said that in Egypt, for example, there were periods of marked culture change that could only be ascribed to migrations or invasions. Some intellectuals began to insist that if there were parallel developments in the world, these were because of contacts between the relevant regions. Such an approach was partly influenced by the idea that 'savages' could never have invented the finer aspects of civilization, and that a few people like the Egyptians made all the major inventions, which others borrowed.

It was left to V.Gordon Childe to point out, in the 1940s and 1950s, that in history both evolution and diffusion were powerful forces. Many regions of the world went through the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, and in that order. The urban revolutions of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India were based on the same set of discoveries in metallurgy, transportation, etc. Moreover, it was not accidental that city life and writing emerged together. Yet evolution and diffusion complement each other: human cultures 'evolve', but unlike organisms, have the capacity to borrow from one another. Key developments like the smelting of copper, the wheeled cart, and the alphabet were invented only once but were subsequently learnt and utilized by several groups. In this way, the forces of civilization spread from Egypt and Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean and southern Europe, and ultimately to Western Europe. Thus, paradoxically, diffusion is unique to the evolution of human cultures.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Evolution has come to mean the development of social structures in a sequence of stages, from simple to complex. Complexity refers to internal differentiation, increasing division of labour and specialization, more and more tools and techniques for different tasks, and more social roles in the given society. Note that this does not always entail a gradual process of accretion, and is not necessarily tantamount to 'development' or human progress. Most tribal societies in the world did not develop a Bronze Age; also, in South Asia at least, there was a reversion, after the Bronze Age, to tribal life.

We now catch a quick glimpse of the land and their historical periods, and the developments that led to the beginnings of civilization covering Egypt, Mesopotamia, Harappa and the Shang Civilization of Northern and Central China.

2.2 EGYPT, THE GIFT OF THE NILE

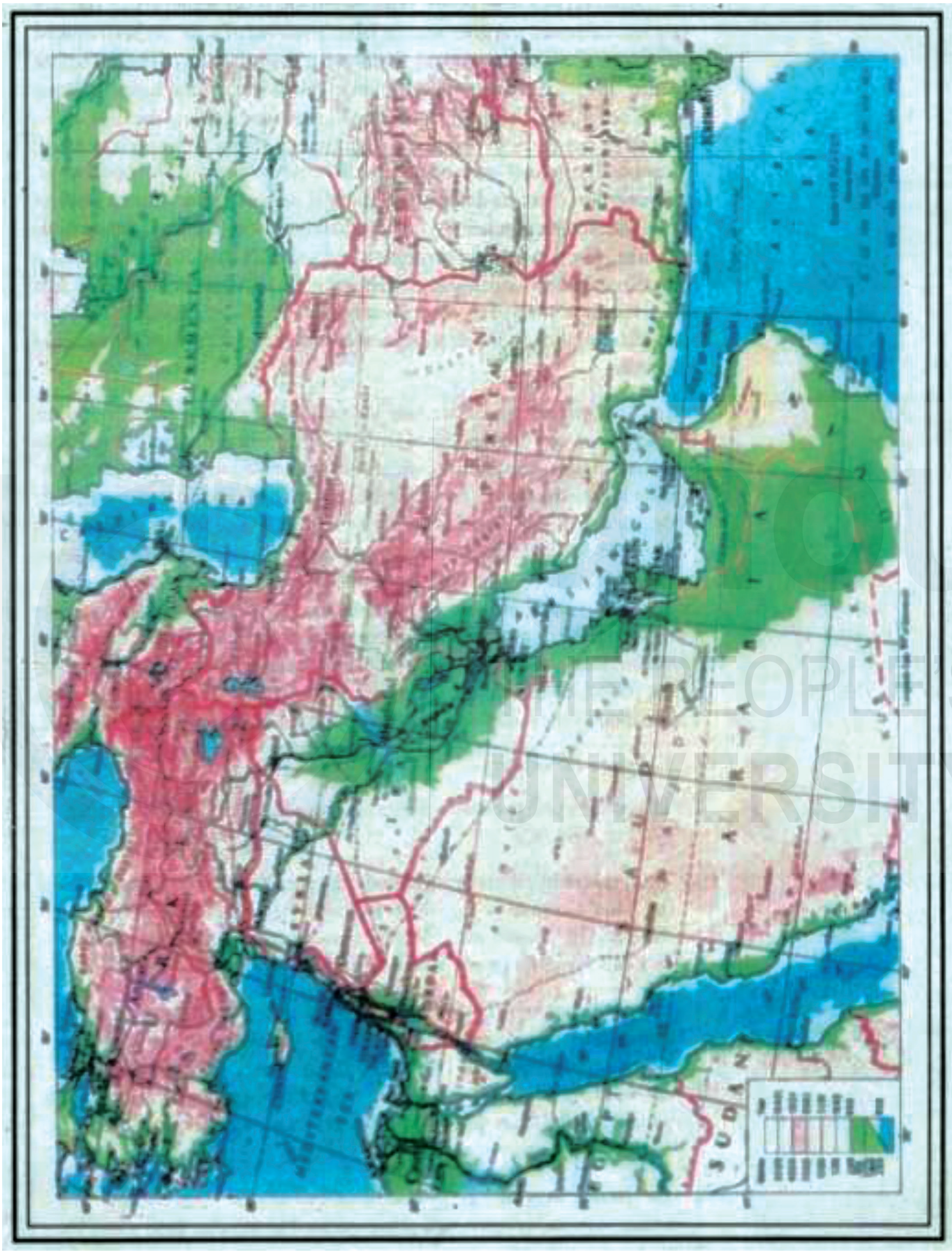
The Egyptian culture region lies north of Aswan and the First Cataract of the Nile valley northward to the Delta. The valley of the river Nile is 700 km long in this stretch, but on average only about 10 km wide. It is sunk between two deserts. The Delta of the Nile consists of three major distributaries and their numerous branches. The ancient Egyptians distinguished the two regions as Lower Egypt (the Delta) and Upper Egypt south of it.

Since prehistoric times, people exploited a variety of micro-environments not only in the alluvial valley, but also near the hills of the western desert, and along the wadis (seasonal rivers) of the eastern desert. There are a few springs in the western desert, making the growth of vegetation possible. And when it rained there was grazing. The ostrich, oryx and ibex were hunted there. In Egyptian art, the inhabitants of the western desert were portrayed as men with curly hair, wearing feathers on their heads. The eastern desert, with its numerous wadis and occasional grazing, was a source of various metals (copper, gold), building stones (granite, porphyry, sandstone, etc.), and semi-precious stones (amethyst, onyx, carnelian, translucent alabaster, etc.). Fine-grained wood that could be seasoned, was not, however, available in these arid zones, and so for boats, cedar wood was imported from the Lebanon.

The immensely long Nile gets most of its water in the high mountains of Ethiopia in the monsoon season, so that the high flood reaches Aswan in June. The floods proceed north. In Upper Egypt, flood water stands for four to six weeks in small basins (say, 7 × 5 km) on either side of the river channel, after which, in early October, the flood subsides, having left behind a film of silt that is very fertile. Sowing of wheat or barley starts in November, and the crop usually needs no irrigation—in spite of rainfall being less than 100 mm in the year— because the standing flood water in the basins has moistened the soil adequately. Egypt is truly the gift of the Nile.

In the Delta, the basins remain flooded for long weeks after the floods, and only some parts are cultivable. There is dense reed growth, and the Delta was the pastoral region of Egypt where huge herds of cattle(The ancient Egyptians bred not only animals but also flocks of ducks and geese. They caught other birds and fattened them for important sacrifices.) grazed after the flood subsided. Among the reeds that grew in the Delta was the papyrus (Cyperus), now almost extinct. The outer casing of its stalk was removed, several strips of the sticky

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY



THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

pith were placed alongside one another, and they were moistened and beaten flat into a smooth sheet.

The cultivation of wheat, barley, beans, gram and other winter crops (The flax plant was cultivated and linen was the fabric made out of it for clothes) required little labour when compared with South Asia. For irrigation of the soil before planting, Egyptians had to pay attention to their local natural basins, making cuts in, or raising, their walls according to need, and guiding the flow of the flood from one place to another, so that the maximum area was inundated. Occasionally a natural basin might have to be subdivided with low mud walls, or the overflow channels deepened. Because of this and the fact that the gradient of the Nile is gentle, ancient Egyptian agriculture did not utilize radiating canal networks. In other words, 'irrigation' was neither labour-intensive nor a centralized system dependent on the state for its implementation. It was organized at the level of the local flood basin. Thus the origins of the Egyptian state and kingship do not appear to have been connected with the needs of irrigation.

Egypt was a highly productive land through the centuries, and as late as the Roman period was the supplier of the bulk of the wheat that the city of Rome consumed. Yields were high in terms of seed and labour inputs. Correspondingly, population densities were high. We are reminded of the fact that the gigantic pyramids could only have been built by a huge labour force recruited from perhaps the entire valley, at no cost to agricultural production. Besides, dense populations could mean, theoretically, that at certain times and in some places, land became scarce, and hence a resource that was fought over. Warfare over land can result in the subjugation of one group by the leader of another group. However, in the case of Egypt it is unlikely that population pressures built up in the period just before the emergence of the state. We thus have no ready explanation for the evidence of war heroes in the Archaic or pre-dynastic period.

Between about 3500 and 3000 BC, certain settlements appear to have developed as centres of political-military or economic importance. In southern (Upper) Egypt there was Nekhen or Hierakonpolis, where archaeologists have found a perimeter wall, a sacred precinct with the remains of stone columns, and a cache of beautifully carved stone vases, ivory labels for goods, and cosmetic palettes, some of which appear to depict kings exercising military power. There is also a cemetery in which a few burials, with jewellery of gold, silver, turquoise, carnelian and garnet, appear to be those of the elite.

Near the head of the Delta, south of Cairo, was the settlement of Maadi, which, after about 3500 BC, reveals many cultural elements such as carved palettes and pottery of the Upper Egyptian sort, but also certain kinds of houses and pottery that are Palestinian in origin. As much copper occurs at the site, and also bones of the donkey and material from Upper Egypt, it is believed that Maadi handled an overland trade between the Nile valley, Sinai (a rich source of copper and turquoise), and Palestine.

This was a period of political unification in which the Pharaoh or king assumed the protection and patronage of certain deities and wore the crowns of both Upper and Lower Egypt, and when a fairly unified material culture extended along the Nile valley. Writing came into existence, and technological advance related to copper metallurgy was made. Many of these developments will be discussed in later pages.

In the Old Kingdom the most spectacular innovation was the advent of the pyramid, a huge stone memorial cum tomb that ensured not only the survival of the bodily remains of a dead pharaoh, but also that people on earth worshipped the dead and deified ruler. Many of the pyramids were built near the apex of the Delta, where also, on the left bank of the Nile, the city of Memphis was founded. All the early pharaohs were crowned at Memphis. Nearby were the mastabas, stone-built tombs of the nobility. Meanwhile, Abydos was another centre with newly emerged elites, judging from its brick-built and roofed tombs with jewellery and boat models, and also flanked by store rooms, presumably stocked with provisions for the dead in the after-life. The large tombs were surrounded by clusters of humble graves.

The most striking elements of ancient Egyptian civilization are its material prosperity, exquisite writing, painting, and reliefs on the walls of temples and tombs, pyramid building and cultural emphasis on mortuary memorials and the cult of dead kings, expert craftsmanship in several stones and metals, and continuous contacts with the world outside: Nubia, Sinai, Palestine, and the Mediterranean islands.

2.3 MESOPOTAMIA AND ITS CITIES

If we were to sum up the personality of Bronze-Age Mesopotamia in a similar way, we would mention its precocious urban development and its cultural emphasis on the superiority of city life; in contrast to Egypt, there were numerous city-states often contesting power, trade routes, and land. Rather than high populations per se, this region saw an exceptional degree of nucleation of population in large urban centres. Also characteristic of Mesopotamia is the wealth of its cuneiform literature on clay tablets, and the propensity of the state system to keep written records of all public transactions. Exquisitely carved cylinder seals that were rolled on clay tablets after they were written but still wet, or on the clay sealings of jars or packages, represent an extension of literacy. There was also openness to the world from a very early date. Most important were Mesopotamia's contributions to the development of mathematics and astronomy.

Mesopotamia is the land of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and the Euphrates is the 'lifeline' of the ancient civilization (the Tigris is prone to unexpected floods and did not attract early settlement). Here too, as in Egypt, it was the flood plain of a major river that was cultivated by what appears to have been a prosperous peasantry.

The southern plains are also called 'Sumer', for this was the land of the Sumerians, (They spoke the Sumerian language) the first city dwellers of the land. Sumer is a semi-arid desert, sparsely vegetated. In the lowest reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the land is marshy, and boats connect the small villages to one another. Fishing is important to the economy, and in the tall reed growths, birds and wild pigs were hunted. Before the full development of agriculture, the earliest settlements of Sumer–of hunters and fisherfolk–were located in this southern marsh region.

In Sumer the rainfall (below 200 mm a year on average) is not adequate for the staple crops, wheat and barley. (There were also lentil, peas, beans and vetch; onions, garlic, cucumber and lettuce; and date cultivation in summer. Flax was the vegetable fibre.) Agriculture therefore depended on the rhythm of the Euphrates. The Euphrates rises with the onset of winter and spring rains on the mountains of Turkey in November, and reaches its height in April. Because of the slope of the land, the river branches into several arms (there were five of them in the Bronze Age) on entering Sumer; these divide into further branches, so that the force of the water is dissipated. Thus, between November and April, with a simple technology the water of the Euphrates can be diverted into canals or ditches and thence into individual fields. To regulate the flow of water to the fields, huge rolls of date palm-leaf mats were placed across the ditches, and topped with mud. When the rolls were lifted from one end, the water was released. Irrigation and the use of the seeder plough contributed to tremendously high outputs per hectare and labour input, and high yields per sown seed.

Unlike the Nile, the Euphrates brings down salts dissolved in its water. In the extreme heat of the Iraqi summer, capillary action in the harvested fields causes the salts to be brought to or near the surface, which is not good for the crop that will be sown in the following autumn. Thus the traditional method has been to leave fields fallow in alternate years, so that bushes grow wild and their deep roots lower the water table. These weedy bushes are eaten by goats and sheep; and letting flocks graze on fallow fields contributes fertilizing manure to the soil. This practical dovetailing of animal herding with agriculture had important social and political consequences in ancient Mesopotamia.

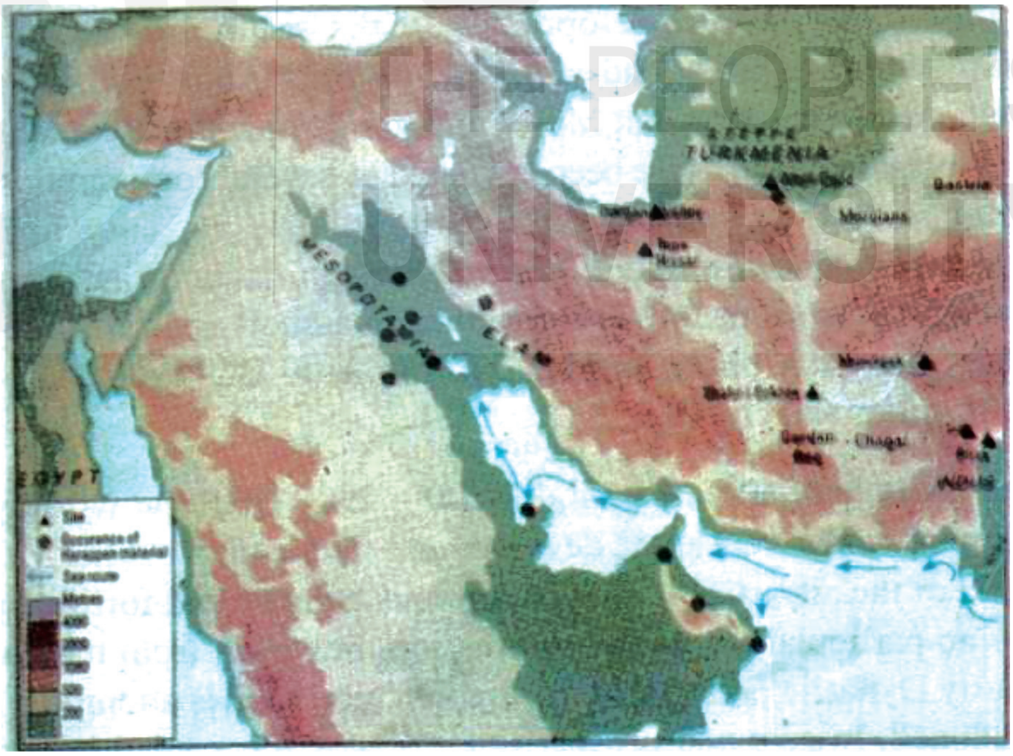
Pastoralism was complementary to agriculture, and often members of the same community could be either pastoralists (taking the animals out in winter and spring to graze on the steppe or desert), or cultivators. Because some families specialized in pastoralism, the animal wealth of ancient Mesopotamia was enormous and wool, the chief fabric, was exported. Pastoral produce (milk and milk products), together with river fish, provided a reliable buffer against harvest failures. This wide-based subsistence base was offset by poor mineral wealth. Mesopotamia's wood for carts, boats, and roof beams came mostly from the Zagros and the Lebanon. So too, metals were imported from the Zagros and the Anatolian and Iranian plateaus.

The system of irrigation made for conflict between agricultural communities. Those who utilized the upstream section of a channel could either use too much water, or neglect to clean the bed of the channel, or release destructive water, to the detriment of downstream fields. Friction over irrigation schedules between upstream and downstream users has through history led to the repudiation of kinship between communities in Iraq. Moreover, this is an unstable system because canals get silted rapidly and are short-lived; and the channels of the Euphrates may abruptly change their course, leaving a settled tribe without irrigable land. Warfare over land, in other words, was always in the offing, not because land was scarce for the population, but because of the volatile ecosystem.

The plains of the lower Tigris and Euphrates were occupied soon after about 5000 BC, in the Ubaid period. There were small fishing settlements in the beginning, but agricultural life was established soon thereafter. Material culture was limited. The significance of the Ubaid period also lies in evidence for Mesopotamian ventures into the Gulf, and in the fact that the temple, which was to develop into the urban institution par excellence, is already present. At this stage the temple was a simple shrine that would have housed the image of a deity. On temple floors were found the residues of worshipper offerings (fish bones, pottery, etc.)

In the following, Uruk, period (about 4000 to 3100 BC), the population rose, many more villages came into existence, there is evidence for the plough and the wheel, and, towards the end of the period, written records are attested. The late Uruk period, best represented at the extensive site of Uruk (Warka), also saw the invention of the cylinder seal, and experiments with the construction of large, monumental, temples. The range of materials in use widened considerably. How these developments in the south are linked with an 'expansion' up the Euphrates and eastward into what is now Iran, has not been worked out. All we know is that Mesopotamian temple architecture, writing, and pottery forms appear to have been emulated by several communities outside Sumer, alongside their own material culture. It is not easy to read the archaeological evidence as 'trade'. Yet, what is significant is that, as in Egypt, many developments seem to occur together in a short span of time (in this case, in the Late Uruk phase, around 3300 to 3100 BC) preceding the first evidence for rulers and city life.

During the short Jamdat Nasr period (3100 – 2900 BC) the writing system and seal carving underwent some development. Thereafter, the Early Dynastic is the period of the city-state with its numerous temples and fortified palaces. There was no particularly smooth progression, however, from the Late Uruk into the Early Dynastic periods. Many architectural modes attempted in Uruk were abandoned. In size and prosperity Uruk was superseded by city-states such as Lagash.



Map
Source – Shirin Ratnagar, Understanding Harappa, p. 49 Tulika Print Communications, New Delhi, 2001

2.4 THE HARAPPAN WORLD

In the Harappan world, subsistence depended on much the same species as in western Asia and Egypt. On the greater Indus plains, barley and wheat, together with peas, gram, sesame and mustard, were grown. Cotton was grown for fibre. Sheep, goat and cattle bones attest to animal husbandry, and cattle comprised both western Asiatic species as well as the humped Indian variety. In Kutch, millets are attested, and at Lothal rice husk impressions have been detected in clay.

The Harappan heartland lay in a transitional zone between the winter rainfall regime of western Asia and the monsoon rainfall system of South Asia. Punjab may get only 120 mm rainfall in winter, and Sind just 30 mm (both regions have heavier rainfall during the monsoon), but even this is of critical importance because wheat and barley are winter crops.

More reliable–and therefore important–than rainfall, however, is ground or subsoil water. You may remember that the city of Mohenjo-daro had an estimated 700 wells for its domestic water supply. Along the now dry stretch of the Hakra river in Pakistan, the water table is high and wells would have been important. Several Harappan sites in western Sind lie close to natural springs or artesian wells. Until recently, in Sind and western Punjab good wheat crops have been connected with well irrigation. At Allahdino, a small Harappan settlement near Karachi, it appears that water from a stone-lined artesian well was utilized. In Saurashtra, Lothal and other settlements were located near a low trough containing, until the 19th century, fresh water that was lifted to irrigate wheat-Gujarat has no winter rainfall. At the important site of Dholavira on Khadir island in Kutch, where there are no perennial rivers, bunds were constructed across the channels of minor rivulets to pond the seasonal flow and divert it into reservoirs in the city. But what about the majestic Indus river?

The annual discharge of the Indus is roughly eight-fold that of the Euphrates, and more than twice that of the Nile. Because of the volume of water that it carries, and the slope of the land, the velocity of the Indus is also much the highest. It is therefore a destructive river, and does not bring sheet floods. Much of the flood escapes in well-defined and wide channels like the Western Nara, but in living memory the Indus has also been known to have swept away hundreds of villages.

The seasonal rhythm of the floods is also unique. Being at its highest in August (because of heavy rainfall in the Himalaya), the level of the river is low between April and February, the wheat and barley season. Thus canal irrigation would not have been possible for these winter crops in protohistoric times. Moreover, it was only in places where the floodwater stood for some time and thoroughly soaked into the ground, that the winter crops could be raised without further irrigation. In areas that had not been so flooded, farmers would have raised water from pools, springs, depressions, or lakes. This in turn meant that irrigation required high labour inputs in comparison with irrigation in the Nile and Euphrates valleys. Lift irrigation would have depended on animal power working sweeps or lifts, so that in this region the cattle population would have been high. In such a system, working cattle would have had to be raised within/near the villages, although sheep and goat herders could have moved over long distances. In Harappan agriculture therefore, we infer that there were labour bottlenecks in the winter months, and that cattle breeding was a major factor in the raising of crops.

The Harappan settled area was not distanced from sources of good wood, or stone or metal, in the same way as were Egypt and Sumer. Good wood from the shisham was available in northern Punjab, teak in parts of Gujarat. Settlements like Ropar gave access to the Shivaliks and the wood of the cedar for the roof beams of Mohenjo-daro. Not far south of Mitathal and Rakhi Garhi lived the copper producing tribes of northern Rajasthan. Shells were obtained off the coast of Saurashtra. And within the greater Indus valley, at Rohri, there were outcrops of chert stone, used all over the Harappan region for household tools.

The Harappa civilization (2600-1800 BC) was contemporary with the Egyptian Old Kingdom and First Intermediate period, and the later-Early Dynastic to the Isin-Larsa period in Sumer. Details are not repeated here, but we can revise a few points.

The formative period, dating approximately 3300 to 2600 BC, saw the spread of agricultural settlements over the plains of the Indus system, and the cultivation of the same crops and animals as in the urban period. This included the cultivation of cotton, and large numbers of bone awls (needles without eyes) may reveal the use of leather also. In the formative period there was building in brick, the use of wells, the beginnings of working with copper, the fashioning of stones such as steatite and shells into ornaments, the use of the plough, and contacts at a distance across the highlands of Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Although there were regional cultures, there was also much contact between them. Paradoxically, there is also evidence for inter-community warfare, including the appearance of perimeter walls around certain settlements. Two frontier villages, Mehrgarh and Rahman Dheri, that had grown to large size and had several craft activities, could have been the seats of tribal chiefships. Perhaps at these two centres, chiefships developed in the process of managing relationships between the local agriculturists and nomadic pastoralists who brought their herds of goats and sheep down from the mountains of Baluchistan to graze on the plains in winter.

In South Asia, as in Egypt and Sumer, there is evidence for the gradual development of some techniques, but there were also disjunctures or abrupt changes in settlement, including the abandonment of several sites after this antecedent period and the establishment of new villages or towns in the following period. Rahman Dheri and Mehrgarh, for instance, do not have urban Harappan material at all, even though these villages did flourish at least partly contemporary with Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. It is also significant that in the urban period the pattern of external contacts changed. Instead of interaction with the uplands of Baluchistan and Afghanistan, there was now sea trade with Oman, Bahrain, and southern Sumer. The carving of ivory for various kinds of domestic and ornamental artefacts; the prolific use of faience, a synthetic quartz-containing substance, for ornaments, cosmetic vessels, and seal tokens; the making of long and thin beads in lustrous red carnelian stone; the decoration of small carnelian beads with etched white designs; stamp seals with the emblems of usually wild animals; the use of silver containers; skillfully fashioned gold ornaments; large baked brick structures for storage; and writing are some of the new elements connected with city life in the Harappan period proper.

SOUTH KOREA
NORTH KOREA
East China Sea
Liaoning
Hebei
Shandong
Jiangsu
Anhui
Zhejiang
Fujian
Shanxi
Shaanxi
Henan
Hubei
Hunan
Jiangxi
Guangdong
Guangxi
Gulf of Tongking
Guizhou
Sichuan
Yunnan
Gansu
Inner Mongolia
USSR
C H I N A
VIETNAM
BURMA
modern city
international border
Shang city
Han city
Great Wall

Map 3

Source : Times Atlas of Ancient Civilization

2.5 THE SHANG CIVILIZATION OF NORTHERN AND CENTRAL CHINA

China was the last of our regions to see the Bronze Age. Although neolithic cultures in China are dated as early as 6000 BC, the first phase of the Bronze Age, called the Erhlitou phase, when the Hsia (sometimes written Xia) dynasty ruled and bronze came into use, dates between 2200 and 1760 BC. In this phase, Erhlitou was one of the main settlements, with walls of rammed earth encircling it.

The Hsia dynasty was succeeded by the Shang, whose tenth ruler established the city of Chengchou around 1500 BC. Ritual human sacrifice is now in evidence and so also, writing. The widest distribution of Shang sites occurred in this middle phase. The civilization is named after the chief ruling dynasty, even though there was probably no political unification and other states also contested for power. The twelve last Shang kings ruled from the city of Anyang, for a period of almost three centuries. The dynasty was defeated by the Western Chou in about 1122 BC.

In the neolithic stage villages were founded on the Huang Ho (the 'Yellow River') and the Yangtze. Foxtail millet (Setaria italica.), broomcorn millet (Panicum miliaceum) which was to be the chief crop of the Shang villages, and rice were domesticated, the latter along the east coast and in the Yangtze valley. Hemp gave a coarse fibre for clothing. The tools of cultivation were made of bone and stone. Although specialized pastoralism, with emphasis on the milk products of animals, was never important in China, the buffalo, cattle (Bos exiquus), goats, sheep and pig were kept, and also poultry. (In the Shang period, the most frequently occurring animal bones are those of the buffalo.) Grain was stored in sunken pit structures. A fine grey pottery was made in the Longshan neolithic culture on the wheel, (The potter's wheel was used to thin the walls of the pots, not as an aid to quick, and therefore mass, production) but no wheeled transport existed until the Shang period. The carving of jade, the exquisite but hard stone of China, began in the neolithic cultures. There is little evidence of a chalcolithic stage in China.

Bronze-Age sites were spread along the Huang Ho valley and to its north (up to Beijing) and south (but not along the Yangtze) and to a small extent on the coast. There were settlements on the River Wei, a tributary of the Huang Ho, in the loess region, and on the River Hwai as well. The range of animal species represented by bones at Anyang testifies to dense forest growth in the Huang Ho basin in ancient times. Unlike the other major rivers mentioned above, the Huang Ho is not navigable in any stretch. While this river provides an expanse of cultivable alluvium, it is the Yangtze, flowing further south, that is the larger river, its rice cultivators taking advantage of the higher rainfall in its valley, and, in modern times, the more urbanized zone. The Huang Ho, the millet and wheat growing region of China, is a turbulent river carrying a huge load of yellow silt, frequently flooding or changing course. Most Bronze Age sites were settled near small tributaries rather than on the Huang Ho itself.

This valley of northern China has harsh winters and temperatures can fall to -8°C. It is the summer that is the wet season, monsoon rains amounting on average to 360 mm a year. Rain water is supplemented by water from wells or from small ditches cut from the tributaries to sown fields.

Erhlitou, a major settlement of the Hsia dynasty, was situated in south-west Shanxi on a tributary of the Huang Ho. In some ways it provides a transition between neolithic and Shang China. The use of rammed earth for building the perimeter wall and house foundations was characteristic of the Chinese Bronze Age. Some of the fine grey pottery was made with hollow legs, as would be the bronze sacrificial vessels of the Shang. Metal tools such as knives were rare. It appears that the same language was in currency from Hsia to Western Chou times.

The tenth Shang king moved his capital to Chengchou, on a plain fed by three small tributaries of the Huang Ho as it leaves the mountains. There were graves with sets of pots for the afterlife, the buried personage often accompanied by a dog. There were bronze casting areas to the north and south of the settlement enclosure wall. Many kinds of bronze tools and vessels were excavated, and a few inscribed bones were found.

The Shang period is characterized by the use of bronze on an enormous scale, although stone sickles and bone tools and weapons such as arrowheads remained in use; writing; the use of the horse and chariot in warfare; and walled settlements. The population of a Shang walled town consisted of one or more lineages, whose leading clan provided the rulers. Anyang, 150 km north of Chengchou, was built by the nineteenth Shang king as his capital. It lies on the plain of the Huan, a tributary of the Wei, which flows into the lower Huang Ho. Its best excavated area is Hsaio Tun, with pit houses as well as structures on beaten-earth platforms, craft workshops, storage facilities, and elite graves with ritual bronzes and jade, with or without human sacrifices. Sixteen elite burials in underground wooden chambers had chariot trappings, weapons and armour. The two-horse, two-wheeled chariot had arrived fully developed (from Central Asia, probably) around 1200 BC at Anyang and became a mark of royalty. (Chariot burials would continue in China until about 400 BC, when horse riding and cavalry warfare developed. Cavalry renders the chariot warrior a liability on the battlefield). This, in a region that had no previous history of wheeled transport! The horse chariot was an instrument of warfare, but exactly how effective it was, we cannot tell. A text of a later period refers to the injuries suffered by a prince when he fell out of one.

Fine white pottery made of kaolin clay was in use together with other pottery. Wooden furniture was lacquered red with the substance of a tree. Coarse hemp cloth was worn, and silk came into use. Marine cowrie shells were in use. The substance par excellence, however, was jade and it was used for many kinds of ornaments and ritual objects.

The material culture labelled "Shang" occurs at sites from Shensi to the Pacific ocean, and scholars have suggested that no single state could have encompassed such a huge region. "Shang", therefore, refers to a period and a civilization that laid the foundations of classical Chinese civilization, but politically probably involved several state polities in contact with each other, the Shang being the most powerful and ritually supreme of them.

2.6 THE USE OF COPPER AND BRONZE

Copper was the first metal to be used in most parts of the world, followed by bronze, an alloy of copper with a low percentage of either arsenic, lead, or tin. The advantage of these metals is not necessarily that they are more resilient than stone, but that they can be melted and cast into a wide range of shapes and sizes of tools and weapons, with their working edges or points in the desired form. Bevelled-edge chisels in a range of sizes, toothed saws, adzes with sharp edges, and heavy-duty axes were tools possible or more effective in metal rather than stone. They made good tools for carpentry, for carving stones and ivory, for cutting shells or leather, and so on. In addition, copper is malleable, and can be beaten into thin sheets or vessels of the desired shape. This makes for very thin objects, not possible when copper is cast, and thus is an economical use of the metal.

Metallurgy was specialist work. Not everyone could recognize ores on the ground, or know their properties under heat, leave alone build and control the working of a kiln, using the best charcoal. It is possible that early metallurgy was a skill and lore passed down the generations among some small groups of people. These people would need to be mobile because the ores of copper, lead and tin are scarce and dispersed on the crust of the earth, and also because in their own tribes the scope for utilizing copper would have been limited. Metallurgy came into its own when specialists produced objects for royal ancestor rituals as in China, or tools for urban workshops of the Mesopotamian temple and palace establishments, or for mortuary cults as in Egypt. Not only were such institutions a source of sustained demand, but the infrastructure, such as fuel, raw material and the day-to-day needs of metallurgists, could be provided. Hence the implications of metallurgy were fully realized only with the coming of states and/or cities, and not in the context of neolithic, cultivating or animal-herding, tribal society.

In western Asia copper was first used by tribal agriculturists around 7000 BC. Native copper (copper found in its metallic state) was beaten into ornaments in this first stage of technological development. Farming villages in northern Mesopotamia learnt to use native copper around 5000 BC. In the Ubaid culture in the south of Mesopotamia, casting (pouring molten metal into a mould) of artefacts was known. The smelting of copper ores (in which metallic copper exists in chemical combination with other minerals) requires brick kilns or even simple clay-line depressions in the ground, in which wood charcoal and the powdered ore are placed for some hours in temperatures around 700^0 C. (This applies to oxidic ores such as azurite and malachite, with beautiful colours, and rich in copper. Such ores are usually found in the upper profile of a copper deposit. Sulphidic ores that are reached at greater depths, however, require reduction. The ore is powdered and roasted so that sulphur is lost. In the smelting kiln, thereafter, the ore is smelted). For casting copper–it melts at 1084° C–a higher temperature is required, though for a short time, and the molten metal is quickly poured into a mould to set in the required shape. The ancient Egyptians are known to have used blow pipes and bellows to increase the oxygen supply in the kiln, and thereby raise the temperature. Alloying 9 to 17 per cent tin with copper effectively lowers the melting point of the metal. Bronze with, say, 10 per cent tin melts at 1000^0C (and lead bronze at an even lower temperature). Another advantage is that tin bronze is a harder material than pure copper.

Complex casting, with the use of closed (two-part) mould and lost wax techniques, came into use in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia for temple statuary, for shaft-hole axes used as weapons, etc. Beaten copper helmets were worn by warriors. In Mesopotamia, arsenic alloying was more common in the earlier stages, but tin bronze came into more frequent use around 2500 BC. The range of tools and weapons of copper and bronze excavated at third-millennium sites in Sumer testify to mastery over metallurgy, but no early production centre has been excavated so far. Copper was acquired from the peninsula of Oman, and from several places in upland Anatolia and Iran.

Egypt acquired copper from the peninsula of Sinai (where turquoise, a blue stone containing copper and aluminium phosphate, was also available), and later also from the Eastern Desert, from Cyprus, etc. Unalloyed copper was in frequent use, and also some arsenic bronze. The regular use of tin bronze is evidenced after about 2000 BC.

In Egypt, the use of native copper and some smelting began after 3500 BC, the major artefact types being daggers and axes. In the Archaic period too, much copper production went towards weaponry, mainly spearheads and daggers. Saw marks have been detected on a stone bowl. Thereafter, we have evidence for a prolific range of copper tools for carpentry, stone work, leather industries, etc. Splayed and convex-shaped knives were used for cutting leather; adzes, chisels of varying shapes and sizes, saws, nails, and piercers for advanced carpentry for the construction of boats; the carving of stone palettes and vases also required metal tools of appropriate size and accurate working edges.

In South Asia excavated material of the period preceding the cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa has produced very little metal. A few crucible fragments, and some pieces of rods and bangles, are the main finds. We see a marked increase in the variety of metal tool forms and techniques with the onset of the urban Harappan period. Hard and fine-grained ivory, one of the new materials in use, could not have been carved without fine and sharp metal chisels and drills. The perforation of long and slender carnelian beads also was done with the use of bronze drills. Blocks of steatite, for making seals and ornaments, would have been cut with saws. Faience carvings would have been finished off with a knife. Seal carvers' tool kits would have included small awls, drills, and burins (all pointed tools). Shell cutting was done with metal saws. There were, in addition, metal fishing hooks and razors for everyday use. Large vessels were beaten out of copper. Weighing-scale pans were made of metal, for accuracy. Metal weaponry included arrows, daggers, and sword blades; as elsewhere, there was weaponry both in bronze/copper and in stone.

Metallurgical techniques in use in the Harappan world included cold hammering, shallow casting, two-piece stone moulds, and occasionally (for the Dancing Girl, for instance), lost wax casting. There is also evidence for soldering, rivetting (piercing two pieces of metal and holding them together with another metal piece), etc. In the Harappan period, pure copper, lead alloys, and tin alloys were in use.

In China there is scarce evidence of a chalcolithic or copper-stone stage, but we can tell from the fine, thin grey ceramics that the technology of the reducing kiln had been mastered in the early Shang period and probably earlier. Pottery kilns were not simple bonfires, but two-tier clay structures with flues or air circulation devices, the fuel burning in the lower chamber and an upward draught being created. No potter's bonfire could give steady temperatures above 900^{0}C as these kilns could.

The advent of metallurgy itself may have been far speedier in China than in western Asia. In the Erhlitou phase copper was alloyed with either tin or lead,

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

and multiple-piece moulds were used for casting. A large proportion of metal output, as evidenced archaeologically, was vessels for the ancestor rites. Such bronze vessels often imitated the shapes of pottery. The Shang procured their copper from regions beyond their political boundaries: mines in mountains near the Yangtze and North Shensi, and tin from South Shensi province. There were several sources of copper and tin within a 100-km radius of An Yang. In the Chinese tradition as known from records of later periods, it was held that the founder of the Hsia dynasty commissioned the mining and casting of round four-legged bronze vessels, with 'all the myriad creatures' depicted on them. These were in time handed down to the Shang rulers, and then to the Western Chou. This tradition indicates that bronze casting, closely associated with royal sacrifice, symbolized power and legitimacy. The horse-drawn chariot was constructed of wood with presumably bronze tools, and had a bronze draught pole, tubular bushings for mounting the wheels, and harness.

The bronze ritual vessels of the Shang have been written about voluminously. There are dozens of complex shapes, for cooking, storing, serving food, for washing and for water. At feasts, each aristocratic person was served his food in a set of dishes. Ornate figurative schemes on the vessels were possible because they were cast with the use of multiple-piece clay moulds that were carefully fitted together. The decorative schemes were appropriate to the ancestral feast in that they portrayed mythological elements such as the dragon, the symbol of water, the phoenix which embodied the wind, and so on. One of these vessels is inscribed, "King Wen Ding is making a sacrifice to his Mother."

Such vessels have been excavated in huge numbers. Once used, they were buried away, never to be melted and re-fashioned into utilitarian objects. True, tools made of bronze were in use in Shang China. Yet these have not been found in large numbers because they were the kind of objects that would have been melted down. Instead, it is stone or clay moulds for arrows, socketed axes, knives, leaf-shaped spearheads; also jingles used with chariots; and a few heavy rectangular axes (probably weapons) that have been found. This said, the seemingly wasteful use of bronze is only partly explained by the ample supplies

Illustration : Shang Wine Container (Bronze) Source : J. Rawson of tin and copper in China. More relevant to the scale of utilization was the needs of ritual vessels. In the tomb of a Shang queen were buried 217 of these sacrificial vessels, incorporating 21 different forms. There were 130 bronze weapons also, so that the total weight of the bronze in this single tomb was 1,625 kg. (In addition there were 590 jade objects and 7000 cowries.) The inscribed vessel mentioned above was 133 cm high and weighed 875 kg. (It may intrigue you, however, that jade is harder than ordinary steel, and therefore did not await the invention of bronze tools in order to come into use in China. Its use goes back to the neolithic cultures. In fact it was cut with stone (say, slate) knives and abrasives like quartz sand.)

In summary, we can state that the Bronze Age represents a true leap in technology as far as metal work, and therefore other crafts using metal tools, are concerned. Most important is a point realized best by Gordon Childe: these were produced for the urban elite rather than the populace. The frequent use of moulds points to mass production, at least where metal weaponry is concerned. The social contexts of such technological development was the emerging division of labour and specialization, and also demand from ruling elites and their productive establishments.

2.7 SUMMARY

Introducing you to the Bronze Age Civilizations we have discussed in brief four civilizations, namely, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Harappan and Shang. We have mainly focused here on the lands, geographical features and the human settlement in four different geographical areas. We have also explained briefly the technological base of these civilizations giving reference to the use of copper and bronze. In the next Unit we will discuss about other important features of the Bronze Age Civilizations.

2.8 EXERCISES

1) Write a brief note on ancient Egyptian civilization.
2) What are important characteristics of early Mesopotamian civilization?
3) In what ways the Harrapan civilization was unique?
4) Discuss the importance of the Shang civilization.
5) ‘Bronze Age represents a true leap in technology as far as use of Bronze and Copper are concerned.’ Explain.

ignou
THE PEOPLE’S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATIONS 2

Structure

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Urbanism

3.3 The Role of Trade

3.4 Modes of Expression

3.5 Social Structure of Bronze Age Societies

3.6 Summary

3.7 Exercises

3.1 INTRODUCTION

After centuries of tribal life in the Bronze Age we find new developments in urban life, economy and social institutions. In this Unit, you will be introduced to the process of urbanization and the importance of trade in the Bronze Age Civilizations. You will also learn about different modes of expressing oneself and the form of social structure that developed in the Bronze Age. Through a broad survey of these developments you will be able to understand major developments in the world's earliest civilizations.

3.2 URBANISM

In general, the settings of our civilizations are the broad expanses of the valleys of great river systems, but due to the needs of irrigation from river floods (the Nile), or short canals/ditches (the Euphrates), or ground water (lift irrigation in South Asia and China), actually it was a series of enclaves in each valley that were populated. Urbanism is possible only when the land has a capacity to support a large number of people per unit area: for it entails the clustering of people in dense settlements, rather than an even dispersal across the landscape. Also necessary are technologies that make feasible the transport of bulky food grain to the non-farming populations of urban nodes. In Egypt the Nile was the main artery of communication for the narrow valley. The energy of winds and the river current were freely available. In Mesopotamia too, a great deal of transportation was handled along the Euphrates, and city temples employed large numbers of boatmen. The Indus, too, is a navigable river, but here as in Mesopotamia, we also have evidence for the use of wheeled vehicles. And there were pack animals too: the donkey in Egypt and Mesopotamia, oxen in India.

Yet there was nothing inevitable about the growth of cities. City life and clustering makes sense only when there are several persons engaged in diverse non-food producing occupations such as metallurgy, seal carving, administration, serving the temples, trade, etc. (Only such activities benefit from spatial clustering-agriculture does not.) In the Bronze Age, producers of non-subsistence goods were largely dependants of the rulers or temples. A non-labouring ruling elite ensured not only law and order, but the administrative structure on which the division of labour could be organized. The ruling elite demanded the labour of the populace, if not token tribute as well. An overarching administrative and regulatory structure such as this ran on systems of recording (writing) and calendar keeping. It was in this kind of society that the specialist seal cutter, for instance, was assured of his supplies of stone and bronze tools, and his day- to-day needs such as pottery or grain.

Thus we find that the city was not just a more dense and larger settlement than the villages that supported it with food and fuel. It was also as a social entity, very different from the village community or the tribe. People were linked together not by the ties of kinship as in tribal society, not by custom, tradition and beliefs as co-residents of a village community, (To some extent, community ties would certainly have existed, but it would not be these that characterized urban society)but by interdependence and functional complementarity. The more specialization there was, the more the individual depended on suprahousehold organization mechanisms and less on face-to-face community ties. Instead of being a total of so many tribes and clans, the city was a population held together by regulation and co-ordination. This is why there is a logical connection between the coming of cities and the existence of states or societies ruled by elites. In short, rulers have a central role in this social transformation. This is why, too, writing often comes into being when cities and states emerge.

Of all our regions, Sumer was the most urbanized. Mesopotamian art and literature were essentially urban in their ethos. The great centres of public life, the temple and the palace, with their imposing architecture and immensely complex record keeping, were urban institutions. One of the most skilled of its crafts (perhaps a figurative art), was the carving of cylinder seals, intrinsically connected with life in cities. These seals were rolled on to freshly-written clay tablets or on to the clay sealings of packages or containers. Urban dealings were often impersonal and amongst individuals who were not related or personally known to one another, so that such impressions on messages, records, and commodity containers were essential.

Illustration : Mespotoamian Cylinder Seals

During an early phase temples were constructed on a tripartite plan, a long central hall ending in the podium for the deity's statue flanked by an aisle on each side. Perhaps because of enlargement in the scope of its activities, the

Mesopotamian temple later came to be built on the plan of a house, with a central courtyard open to the sky. And perhaps because a priesthood now interceded between worshippers and their gods, one did not now come face to face with the cult statue on entering the temple. There was, instead, indirect access through courtyards, antechambers, and a bent approach axis. Throughout, the temple retained its distinguishing architectural feature, buttressed and recessed outer walls. With few good woods and stones locally available, architects had to make the best use of mud bricks. Regularly spaced niches and projections gave brick temple facades a play of light and shadow, a device no secular structure ever had. Many city temples were actually quite small, prompting the inference that their multifarious activities were carried out elsewhere: for multifarious they were, judging by clay tablet archives attesting to the organization of subsistence production, bread making, weaving, archive keeping, and various craft workshops. Palaces, on the other hand, were truly imposing structures: huge, with protective perimeter walls, storerooms, and indirect and closely guarded access to the ruler's throne room.

We have said that there was nothing inevitable about the development of cities. There was nothing particularly gradual about it either, and this is clear from the settlement history of Mesopotamia. A huge city like Uruk came about, in the beginning of the Early Dynastic period, (The first Mesopotamian written tablets come from Uruk, at the same time as are evident cylinder seals and monumental temple architecture) more by the desertion of numerous small villages for Uruk, than by the local growth of its own population over the centuries. One reason for such population shifts could have been tensions between communities resulting in militarism and population nucleation behind protective city walls, under the rule of newly-emerged kings. For sure, people are more secure in walled and large settlements than in small villages dispersed over the landscape. This, then, is the background to the Mesopotamian "city state".

In the Mesopotamian literary tradition, Gilgamesh was a heroic king who built the city wall of Uruk. The Epic of Gilgamesh, which narrates his exploits and dwells on the inevitability of the death of even a great king like him, makes frequent references to the city wall, to "Uruk the enclosure", and to the brickwork of Uruk. In the opening portion the text states, *"Climb Uruk's wall and walk back and forth! Survey its foundations, examine the brickwork! Were its bricks not fired in an oven? Did the Seven Sages not lay its foundations?"*

The cities of Egypt, in total contrast to those of Mesopotamia, are largely inaccessible to the archaeologist's pick. The exceptionally narrow valley of the Nile has been continuously occupied and built on for thousands of years, so that many ancient cities (e.g. Abydos, the cult centre of the Old Kingdom) lie buried under modern towns. Rising subsoil water (as at Memphis, the first capital), the tendency for ancient towns to spread laterally along the valley, modern cultivation, and the location of a great number of cemeteries near habitations are other factors that have made urban archaeology difficult in Egypt. What little we know is that houses were rectangular, streets narrow, and the towns often divided into four quarters, each with its temple. More important, however, is the evidence for the establishment of pyramid towns and later, temple towns. Pyramid construction required the recruitment of huge numbers of men, huge quantities of supplies for them, and supplies of tools, raw materials, and crafted items–and hence state-level organization. For each dead king or god installed in a temple, a cult endowment had to be set up, and some of these centres developed as the nuclei of urban centres.

As far as urban archaeology is concerned, Mohenjo-daro occupies pride of place. (Harappan cities as a rule were not occupied in later periods, so that extensive excavation was possible.) The walls of Mohenjo-daro still stand many feet high, because they were exceptionally well constructed. In spite of the absence of written testimony to rulers and dynasties, there were, at Dholavira, Kalibangan, and other Harappan towns, citadels where public buildings and elite residences were built, almost always on elevated ground. On the Mohenjo-daro citadel were located the Great Bath, the storage structure, a large residence with a fenestrated courtyard, and a hall so large that its roof was supported by brick pillars. On the Kalibangan citadel there were ritual structures and elite residential architecture. It is significant that many of the Harappan citadels had perimeter walls, indicating that the rulers required protection from the ruled who lived "downtown" (Students may take note of the opinion of some field archaeologists that some Harappan citadel walls were not for defence but to support constructions on slopes and elevated places).

Because of the scope for extensive excavation, many craft work loci have been found. We know that shell cutting, bead making, seal carving, metallurgy, pottery production and other crafts were, somewhat unexpectedly, located at settlements large and small, almost as if we must revise our definition of urban centres. But if we accept that Bronze-Age craft production and distribution of craft items were elite-organized, we can understand that some industries (especially weight- reducing ones) were located near the source of raw material and/or fuel, some where there was maximum consumption. Households in Mohenjo-daro depended on water from hundreds of wells dug in the city itself; well rooms were often situated near the doorways of multiple-room houses built around one or more courtyards. Most interesting is the fact that the objects and residues left behind in the houses show that activities-shell cutting, bead making, seal carving, etc.–varied from house to house, even in the same neighbourhood.

There is also the testimony that Harappan urban centres provide, in the form of the street drainage system, of civic infrastructures. Street drainage functions only as a planned whole; individual houses cannot organize it piecemeal; this system thus appears to have been the outcome of elite regulation and co-ordination.

As in Mesopotamia, here too, we find little continuity of settlement at individual sites between the formative and the urban periods. In other words, few Harappan cities have earlier habitation levels, and we had seen that important earlier settlements such as Rahman Dheri and Mehrgarh had no Harappan occupation.

The Shang cities were different yet. They were often rectangular, and surrounded by beaten earth walls; as in Mesopotamia, text references reveal that the walls were constructed by deploying mass labour. Housing was either in pits or in wooden structures built on top of beaten earth platforms. Some platforms at Chengchou were surrounded by rows and rows of post holes, which seems to indicate elite residences. As for below-ground houses, these kept people warm in the intensely cold winters of northern China; also, they were easy to dig out from the soft loess and redeposited-loess soils of the north. Moreover, a minimum of wood was required for their construction: "pillars" of earth could be left standing in the centre of a pit, or where desired, to support a wood or thatch roof. Craft production areas were marked by dozens of conical pits with copper residues, crucible fragments, and pieces of casting moulds; by thousands of clay mould fragments in a small area; and by pits with sawed pieces of bone together with bone arrowheads and hairpins.

In the most extensively excavated area of Anyang, the late Shang capital, there were areas with pit houses of the populace with bone and stone tools, in their vicinity were pits used for storage of grain, metal weapons, stone sickles (and even inscribed oracle bones — a veritable archive!), and workshops. The rich queen's grave that we had mentioned, was found in the elite residential area comprising dozens of rammed earth platforms for wooden posts and wattle — and-daub walls. Some of these platforms were very long, say 85 m along one side, and besides actual housing, could have supported ancestral temples.

The connection between newly founded urban centres and political processes comes out not in settlement history, but in traditions of a later period which show that many Shang cities were deliberately built and peopled by kin groups six generations deep. The king would grant a kinsman or high ranking official the right to set out to a new area and build there, with the labour of his own clan or lineage, a town. Lands around the new settlement were cleared for agriculture. With this went a new name granted by the king for the town and its area, and ritual paraphernalia for its ancestor temples. Such a settlement functioned as a kin group and ritual unit, and also a politico-military unit owing loyalty to the king. Perhaps such new foundations were too small to be termed 'urban' in the strict sense. In the case of cities like Anyang, however, it needs to be said that the degree of technical proficiency evident in the ritual bronzes speaks not for hereditary smiths working from their family worskhops, nor for the labour of gangs of unskilled prisoners-of-war, but for what has been called "attached specialists", a highly-skilled workforce producing under the direction of the elite. Two metallurgical production loci here were extensive, and in one case there was a structure housing a foundry, with runnels in the floor.

The connection between Bronze-Age urbanization and the political development of states and emergence of ruling elites, is hopefully now clear. Also, urbanization is connected with the development of new crafts and craft skills, i.e. with specialization, and also with institutions that co-ordinated multiple production activities and infrastructure. This is why, since Gordon Childe, scholars have used the term "Urban Revolution" for this transformation.

3.3 THE ROLE OF TRADE

Did external trade contribute to the structure and particular characteristics of Bronze Age states and early civilizations?

We know that the use of copper, tin, lead and arsenic was integral to the Bronze Age social and economic transformation, and that these metals were not available in the alluvial valleys of the river systems. We also know that the elites of the newly-formed states lacked full-fledged military power and administrative organization. They assumed a sacral role, distinguishing themselves from the rest of the populace more by consumption levels (of metal work, exotic stone beads, shell carvings, etc.) and mysterious powers, than by special privileges over land, water sources, mines, or pastures. Thus there were imperatives to organize the imports of high status-cum-utilitarian things like cedar wood (to Egypt and Sumer from the Lebanon); the turquoise of Sinai to Egypt; jade from the Kunlun Mountains of Central Asia in the case of China; lapis lazuli from north-eastern Afghanistan in the case of Mesopotamia, South Asia and Egypt; or finely cut and polished carnelian beads, but also ivory, gold, lapis lazuli and wood from the Harappan region to Sumer; and cowries from the Pacific coast south of the Yangtze mouths in the case of China. These are only a few instances.

This brings us to the point that much of what we call "trade" was actually import-oriented missions organized by the state. It is significant that in both Mesopotamia and Egypt we have references to dragomans or official interpreters of foreign languages. The Pharaohs of Egypt would equip huge expeditions to go out to the eastern desert, to quarry, say, amethyst; the force would build barrack-like housing near the quarries and would be provisioned with food, fuel and clothing by the palace. After a sufficient quantity of the stone was quarried, the expedition would close and return to the valley. This was the pattern regarding the procurement of turquoise and copper from Sinai also. Cedar of the Lebanon is a prized building wood, as the tree grows high and the wood has a pleasing fragrance when burnt; the literary tradition records that some kings of Sumer organized cedar procurement by having bronze axes cast to equip a work force, and sending/leading it out to the distant and high Lebanon or Amanus range, to cut down the trees.

The ancient Egyptians — and not only the Pharaohs-spent much thought, organization and resources on their tombs, and those of some of the elite displayed long biographies. Near Aswan, the tomb of one Harkhuf, a high state official during Dynasty VI, carries a narrative about his three expeditions to Nubia, each lasting several months. Harkhuf interacted with the chiefs of the inhabitants of Nubia, and "returned with 300 asses laden with incense, ebony, oil, leopard skins, elephant tusks, and boomerangs and all goodly products." As he sailed down the Nile on the successful completion of a mission, he was met by another high official, "with ships laden with date wine, cake, bread, and beer", presumably as a reward. Harkhuf also displays on the wall of his tomb the text of a letter he received from the Pharaoh's son, urging him to bring for him a dancing pygmy he had taken captive, and written about in a letter from Nubia to the Pharaoh. The prince urges Harkhuf to hurry and bring the pygmy to him, and in return he will grant such a wish of Harkhuf that all the people will know.

Instead of continuing with this description of trading patterns, fascinating as they are, we shall now address questions that arise. Scholars have not solved a number of the puzzles. For instance, we have stated above that there is a marked correlation between the period of state emergence and an expansion of trade, in Egypt, Sumer, and South Asia. We had referred to the movement of Upper Egyptian crafted palettes to Lower Egypt, increasing reliance on copper, and the links of Maadi at the Delta head with Sinai and southern Palestine. In western Asia there was not only the occurrence of Uruk-related pottery, seals, temples and occasionally writing at sites on the upper Euphrates system and eastward on the plains of Iran; there was also an Elamite (south-western Iran) expansion eastward into the Iranian highlands, immediately following the Uruk period. Elamite written tablets and seals occurred at a few sites on the Iranian plateau and as far east as the Makran plain of Pakistan. In South Asia, land routes from Baluchistan that brought materials like lapis lazuli to the Indus region ceased to function; a Harappan village was established near the lapis mines in eastern

Afghanistan; and now lapis, together with other materials mentioned above, went out to Mesopotamia by sea. Did these seemingly dramatic expansions and shifts of trade play a causal role in the emergence of kingship and the state? Did procurement of the relevant materials give emerging war leaders additional prestige and legitimacy? Or can we argue the other way, and suggest that such expansions are a symptom of early state formation and the search for metals and prestige materials?

Concerning the fallout, within an early state, of such engagement in trade and how local economies of the Indus or Nile were affected, a few observations can be made. We find that the Harappan requirements of fine wood from the Himalaya/Shivaliks prompted the establishment of villages at the navigation heads of the Chenab (near Akhnoor, Jammu) and the Sutlej rivers (at Ropar). Roof beams of deodar wood from the Shivaliks have been identified at Mohenjo-daro, for instance. Deodar could also have been used for carts, fine furniture, and ships, and for export to Mesopotamia. Thus it appears that the search for raw materials influenced the location of Harappan settlement. In the temple workshops of Sumer, large numbers of women were employed in spinning and weaving of wool, Mesopotamia's export (to Anatolia, to India) par excellence. Clearly, involvement in external trade heavily influenced the deployment of labour.

There are some interesting references in Sumerian literature/inscriptions to kings organizing the mass casting of weapons for military expeditions, and we can also surmise that the more successful a ruler/chief was in procuring copper and the alloying metals, the more militarily successful he would be.

It also appears that the procurement of metals and semi-precious stones from afar for the elite created a need for ever larger quantities of them, or, as elite positions were contested by others, ever more persons desired the same goods. Perhaps, therefore, the Bronze-Age economies had external expansion built into them. At the edge of Ur, a southern Sumerian city, lies a large graveyard with ordinary burials but a few immensely rich graves of the Early Dynastic period. It is reasonable to assume that these were the burials of men and women of the ruling class. They are buried with exquisitely crafted gold and silver vessels, symbolic weapons with gold handles or sheaths, masses of jewellery of gold, lapis, carnelian, etc., and artistically inlaid furniture. So too, we have seen the enormous quanitites of bronze that were buried with the elite at Anyang. Such funerary usage meant that costly and imported wealth went permanently out of circulation, and new supplies of metal and stone had to be acquired for succeeding generations.

As regards the regions abroad that provided the raw materials, we can ask if contact with the centres of civilization generated in them the need to acquire their own bronze weaponry to defend themselves, or created elites among them, with whom the foreign rulers decided to deal. If so, these would have been impulses towards social change in the peripheries of civilization. We find Harappan jewellery cached in peripheral sites such as Kunal in Haryana and Burzahom near Srinagar. As all the Harappan material at these sites was found in one locus instead of being distributed amongst the various houses, we infer that these were gifts made by visiting Harappans to the local elders or chiefs. However, we see no subsequent development of these centres into settlements with more complex technological or economic levels.

As regards the world of Egypt, Byblos, on the coast of Lebanon, became a port whence Egypt procured cedar, and used as a station en route to Crete and the Aegean. Egyptian enterprise here dates from Dynasty II. Perhaps visiting Egyptians built a temple here as well. But Byblos did not remain just a source area; we know that Egypt had to bring to Byblos fine linen garments, and expensively carved stone cups. Most important, Egyptian literature and royal correspondence refer to the rulers of Byblos. In contrast, societies south of Byblos in the southern Levant, nearer Egypt, were not reached by Egyptian arts, writing or metallurgy, in spite of a modest level of trade.

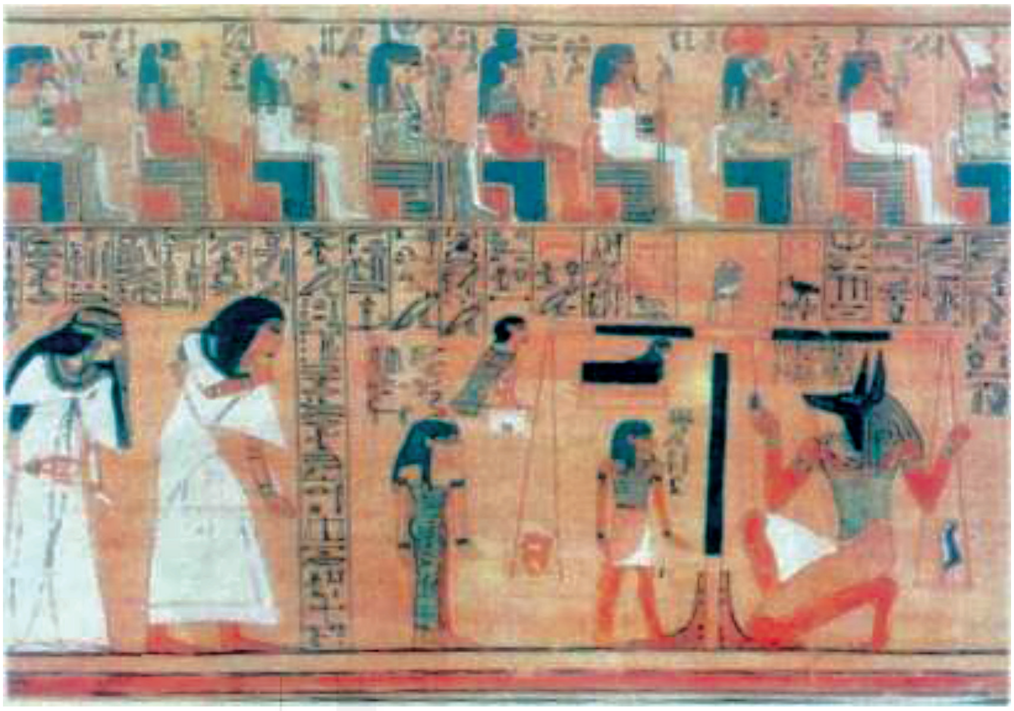
At the mouth of the Gulf, the peninsula of Oman, which is immensely rich in copper, was visited by Mesopotamians and Harappans, but does not seem to have seen the development of cities, writing, its own trade network, or social stratification. In fact, the inhabitants of this richest of copper zones appear to have used tin bronze on a very limited scale in the third millennium. Archaeology has unearthed dozens of centres in Syria, Anatolia, Iran, and Central Asia, that were in contact with the river valley civilizations and have produced evidence for wealthy chiefs, fortified centres, and richly appointed graves. But we cannot ascribe the development of these to trade in any simplistic fashion.

3.4 MODES OF EXPRESSION

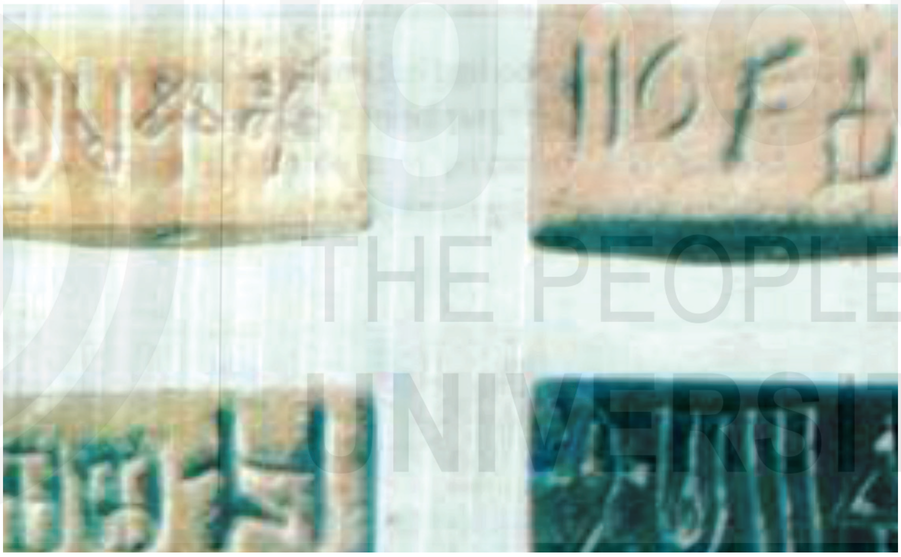
In different modes of expression writing holds most important position. Writing has been called a way of encoding information, or a system of symbolling. A set of visibly recognizable signs (graphemes) stands for a coherent pattern of sounds (phonemes) that hold meaning in a particular language. This is the intellectual achievement that writing represents. In another way, writing brings with it a new 'technology' as it were, its own skills and tools. The first writing systems of the world each consisted not only of hundreds of signs that had to be learnt, they also involved the handling of papyrus and reed brushes (in Egypt), or inscribing a tortoise shell (China), or handling a moist clay tablet and shaping a stylus and getting the writing done while the tablet was still wet (Mesopotamia).

In all the civilizations except the Mesopotamian, the writing system was logographic, with one sign representing one word (a concept, quality, or thing). Egypt maintained this system till about the fourth century AD, and China, with great modification, until today.

The Harappan writing system died out with that civilization. Perhaps the Harappan writing medium was birchbark or cloth, or something else that was perishable. We only have brief inscriptions on Harappan seals, ivory rods, pottery, etc. from the archaeological remains. In the case of Mesopotamia, the writing system was developed for the Sumerian language, but by 2000 BC the public language changed to Akkadian, and in the process of adaptation to the new language, the script became almost fully syllabic, with one sign representing one syllable.



The Earliest Writing (a): Egypt



3 (c) : South Asia

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Writing systems did not grow by incremental processes — they did not "evolve". Potters' marks may be visually similar to the characters of a script, but the meaning of potters' marks is very limited, signifying the owner or the potter. The first written objects in Egypt were painted or incised potsherds of about 3100 BC. The writing was "cursive" and recorded the names of chiefs or rulers, or deliveries of goods to their tombs/houses. Egyptian "hieroglyphic" writing began a little later, on votive objects deposited in temples, on the walls of the tombs of chiefs or rulers, and on small ivory tags tied to objects deposited in tombs. It was used to make notations on highly symbolic reliefs depicting royal feats, on stone palettes, and ceremonial maces. At Hierakonpolis, the first capital of an inchoate Egyptian state, many inscribed objects were found in a cache of old things ritually buried in a temple. The signs of the second kind of writing were pictures, mainly of recognizable objects, but also the names of persons and deities.

Besides written and oral communication there was also communication through the use of images. We have references to Harappan images and seals found in the large cities. Most of the rectangular carved stone seals carry an image above which is a line of script. Almost a hundred kinds of images occur, the greatest number being single creatures, animals or hybrid/mythical creatures. It is likely that the images are social symbols, the emblems of descent groups, clans, or tribes. The writing on the Harappan seals, it was found through computer analysis, has no correlation with the image. Thus even after the beginning of writing oral transmission as well as the use of images for expression continued to have importance in different Bronze Age civilizations.

Harappan Seals

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

3.5 SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF BRONZE AGE SOCIETIES

It is time we attempted a definition of the kind of social structure peculiar to the Bronze Age. This reconstruction shall depend mainly on the Mesopotamian evidence. It is for this region that thousands of written tablets of the third millennium BC are available to the historian, which give enormously detailed information. A large segment of an archive (dozens of clay tablets) for instance, document the month-by-month work of an official in charge of grain disbursements in one small centre. Moreover, there is a wealth of archaeological and settlement pattern data, because the Euphrates and its branches have shifted to the west since the third millennium, so that the area under intense cultivation today has not damaged Bronze-Age sites.

Concerning Mesopotamia, as far back as 1972 the Russian cuneiform scholar, I. Diakonoff, had concluded that its economy after 3000 BC had two separate "sectors", the "communal-and-private" sector, and the sector managed by the state. The first was peopled by rural communities, still structured on descent, and tribal in the sense that private property in agricultural land had not come into existence. As far as the written evidence goes, only a few members of the elite actually purchased land and became private owners. A few third-millennium legal texts attest to the sale of large tracts of land by multiple sellers, (As the names of the sellers' fathers, grandfathers, and other ancestors are often given, we can make out that they were all related in the male line) to individuals who were either the rulers themselves, or high functionaries (Food grains, cloth, fish, oil, and occasionally copper were some of the items given in exchange). These were the only "contracts" that were inscribed on stone (not on ordinary clay tablets), and they make references to certain rituals being performed after the transfer, like the pouring of oil and the driving of nails into walls and feasting the entire group of sellers. All this indicates that the transfer of communally owned lands into private hands was a highly unusual deed. References in royal inscriptions indicate that people could be summoned by clan or lineage to labour in the city or on temples or their estates. Nowhere in the Bronze Age are there references to land registration, or to the state keeping records of land holdings.

The state sector comprised the economies of the temple and palace, the property of gods/kings/sacral rulers. The Mesopotamian temple owned large tracts of land (originally the land of the tribal community) and herds of livestock. The palace of the king also owned land, occasionally that bought from rural communities. Agriculture on such land was performed by the populace under one or other form of allocation, for a few months in the year, or, in the case of prisoners of war and clients and warriors of the king, through the year. The produce of the land and animal herding was also processed. Temples and palaces organized the grinding of flour, the baking of bread, and the production of woolen cloth from sheep's wool, together with a number of crafts utilizing metal, stone, and shell from afar.

There is absolutely no evidence that the rural people had to pay a tax in grain on their harvests. It was periodic labour that they owed to their king and gods. Sometimes temple offerings would have been obligatory, and in this period of very early state formation, when there would have been no standing armies, young men would have been called up for war as and when the need arose. (It is at that stage that metal weapons would be cast on a mass scale.)

The state sector was of large proportions. An entire palace archive available from excavations at the city-state of Mari (1800 – 1750 BC) has been studied, and it appears that the palace itself occupied 3 hectares, with 260 rooms and multiple courtyards. The king allotted parcels of land around the town or further afield, to his men. Allotments of 50 to 80 hectares were worked by 10 to 15 men. People were recruited from the respective localities when labour needs were high, e.g. at harvest time. Texts indicate that palace workshops organized the crafting of textiles, weaponry, leather, bronze tools, etc. The palace provided the raw materials and supplied food and clothes as rations to as many as 400 individuals at any one time. The produce was stored in palace magazines. (Palace and temple workshops were also located outside the enclosed precincts of these institutions.) Merchants went abroad on behalf of the king, and his personal seal was often rolled on packages.

Payments made for labour in the state sector were rations rather than wages. They took the form of flour, bread, wool, fish, etc. They were paid monthly. Detailed lists of payments were drawn up, naming each recipient. Because they were made to the aged and to infants, and because the amounts were standardized according to age and gender, (In Sumer in the later third millennium, adult men usually got 48 litres of flour a month and adult women, 24) these payments cannot be termed wages. They were rations. The major workforce in the state sector comprised the ration workers.

The king and his extended family and military officials not only laid claim to the palace lands, they were also de facto owners of the temple's estates, herds, fisheries and workshops. They are not mentioned ever as performing any kind of labour, but instead often had huge amounts of wealth expended on their burial, as we shall see below. So we conclude that class formation was present but inchoate — it was not yet based on the ownership of basic resources such as land. We could suggest that in any Bronze Age situation it was one kin group that had acquired the permanent power to impose its will on society. This meant that the various tribes and descent groups in the land lost the right to declare war on each other, or resort to blood vengeance. As an elite came to assert its authority with the backing of force, it was the king and his officers who alone could decide who was right or wrong, and the punishments for misdeeds, according to declared laws of the land.

There is evidence that in broad outline society in Bronze-Age Egypt was similarly structured. You may recall that on the Narmer Palette, ahead of the Pharaoh in the red crown of Lower Egypt, walk four standard bearers, with bird or animal emblems, of which each probably represented a tribe or a clan. So here too, as in Mesopotamia, recruitment to warfare may have been by descent group or clan. We have referred in Unit 8 to the wooden tokens given out to soldiers and workmen for their food rations. Expeditions consisting of over a thousand men were on occasion equipped to settle for several months in the eastern desert, to quarry stones or mine metal. Elsewhere, the remains of barrack — like housing testify to an expedition force that built a new city. Records were maintained of tools handed out or given for repair, of attendance, and of ration payments. Attached smiths repaired the tools, scribes kept the records. Once the required quantities of stone or metal were ready, or the new city built, the expedition would close.

Hundreds of wooden or faience statuettes of hoe carriers have been found in ordinary Egyptian tombs. They depict the ushabti or "answerer" who would respond to any calls made on the dead person. When a person died and went to the afterlife, he wanted to cease to join up, with his hoe, for labour on the fields. So an inscription could read, "O Answerer, if I am called up, if I am appointed any work in the Hereafter — even as man is required to cultivate fields, to flood banks, or to carry sand of the East to the West-then speak you: "Here I am!" Quite literally, the statue was expected to take the place of the tomb owner in labour service in heaven.

The Egyptian system of creating estates, however, has no parallel in Mesopotamia. Where the pyramids or mortuary temples of Pharaohs were built, land was endowed for the future cult of these dead kings. These had to provide a range of staple food and luxuries for the continuance of the cult and the well-being of the appointed high priests. Thus the elite did live on the income of such endowments and it appears that the cultivators were not allowed to move away from such estates.

Where the pyramids of the Old Kindgom are concerned, many scholars have tried to work out the labour force that was employed. Probably the Great Pyramid was built over twenty years. One estimate is that a gang of 8 men was required to put in place each of its 2,300,00 huge blocks of stone. Perhaps 100,000 men were employed at this building site over three-month stretches (in the non-agricultural season) each year and for many years.

Similarly, it has been calculated that the city wall, made of hundreds of layers of beaten down mud, which protected Chengchou in northern China, took 10,000 men eighteen years to build. Shang oracle inscriptions indicate that up to 13,000 men could be taken prisoner in one military campaign. Hundreds of prisoners-of-war were sometimes sacrificed to a royal ancestor. Probably it was these prisoners who built the city walls and dug the royal tombs at Anyang.

Given such evidence, it is reasonable to ascribe the planned Harappan cities to state initiative. Where evidence exists on the origins of planned settlements in the ancient world, it is known that street plans did not gradually evolve, but were created at a certain historical juncture, in many cases because a settlement had to be relocated. If this is accepted, you will also find reasonable the argument that in Harappan towns the sizes of bricks were uniform not because of "tight administrative controls", whatever that may mean, but because the populace was ordered or recruited to making bricks on a mass scale. It is in this context, too, that we can begin to appreciate why the copper/bronze tools and pottery found at Harappan sites are so uniform. The state sector, again, is the context of street plans and drains at Harappan sites.

However, it needs to be said that the state did not yet have the means to organize irrigation on a large scale. In Egypt it was at the level of the nomes that irrigation basins were controlled. In ancient Iraq, as in the medieval and early modern periods, it would have been tribes with their traditions of showing up perdiodically at the call of their chief to desilt or dig canals, who coordinated the flow of Euphrates water for irrigation.

Within the umbrella of these fledgling states, we expect, flourished enclaves of autonomous tribes, and hunters and gatherers. The archives of the Mesopotamian city-state of Mari, located on the northern edge of the cultivated zone and the southern frontier of the nomadic pastoralists' domain, show that sheep herders' movements into the irrigated alluvium had to be watched, sometimes controlled. Pastoralists could be of use but also destructive. Pastoral tribes like the Yaminites grazed their flocks in the steppe and desert to the west, north, and east of the Euphrates lowlands in the autumn and winter, moving into the valley for a long sojourn between April and October. If their relations with agrarian communities were amicable, or the state controls were in place, agriculture would benefit from sheep manure on their fallow or newly-harvested fields, and from the extra labour that pastoralists could provide for the harvest. However, flocks could do damage to the standing crop if they entered the arable zone at the wrong time, or disrupt important routes of communication. Urban literary texts sometimes disparaged the nomads as people who knew no cults and did not bury their dead. Perhaps it is the Mesopotamian data alone that also afford us a glimpse of people like the Habiru, who lived on the margins of society, taking to brigandage on the steppe or on the roads, and dwelling in camps. They were not pastoralists in the strict sense, and not integrated into state society. They appear to have always been on the move. "Habiru" was thus not the identity of a people/ tribe — there are no references, for instance, to their elders or chiefs — so much as of marginalized vagrants.

The fledgling state, the state sector, and writing and records/archives do not, it needs to be said, amount to the formation of a bureaucracy in any of these societies. Bureaucracies involve specialization of duties and a chain of command. They involve salaried officials, who function in an impersonal manner and not as the son of X or the father-in-law of Y. In the tomb inscriptions of Egyptian state officials we read that one high functionary could enjoy as many as eighty titles, such as "Seal bearer", "Overseer of the Two Bathrooms", or "Sole Friend". These were honorifics or titles rather than the designations of particular administrative functions. An administrator could recruit soldiers, organize the quarrying of turquoise and the building of monuments, and also hear disputes. The Bronze-Age state had, we said, emerged from a society in which kinship was the relations of production. There was no money economy, and few institutions for the codification of law or for executive action. As we shall now see, rulers, therefore, depended more on building relationships with their subjects, and on their sacral and ceremonial trappings, than on substantial economic privileges.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

3.6 SUMMARY

We have taken a brief look at the Bronze Age societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia (India-Pakistan), and China. They are important not only in terms of the historical transformations that brought them into being, but also because, to some extent, the roots of the cultural traditions of their respective regions lie in the Bronze Age. In this Unit, you have learnt the process of urbanization and the role of trade in the Bronze Age Civilizations. You have also been introduced to various ways of expressions and the form of social structure that existed.

3.7 EXERCISES

1) Explain the pattern of urbanization in Mesopotamian and Harrapan cities.
2) What was the role of trade in the emergence of early state formation?
3) Write a note on various modes of expressions.
4) Give a brief account of social structure in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

UNIT 4 THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Expansion and Consolidation of the Empire
    4.2.1 Cyrus
    4.2.2 Cambyses
    4.2.3 Darius I
4.3 Administrative Reorganization
4.4 System of Coinage
4.5 Language and Communication
4.6 Religion
4.7 Decline of the Empire
4.8 Summary
4.9 Exercises

4.1 INTRODUCTION

You have studied in earlier units about the Bronze Age Civilizations which had emerged by about 3000 BC. In the next five hundred years or so these civilizations acquired greater sophistication and became increasingly complex. Their influence extended to neighbouring areas of West Asia. In the first millennium BC new empires and states emerged not only in Asia but in other parts of the world. A new type of state, which may loosely be referred to as an 'empire', began to emerge, initially in West Asia, from around 1800 BC onwards. As a type of state the empire encompassed a fairly large territory which was not confined to a given geographical zone; was usually monarchical; had extensive military resources; and was based on the collection of a large tribute. Every empire had a core area as its political centre, and the ruling class of the empire belonged overwhelmingly to this core area. The Medes were the first empire-builders in Iran. However it was the Achaemenids who created the first Iranian world empire. Within a few decades of the replacement of Median rule by Achaemenid rule, the region of Fars (Parsa) in Iran had become the centre of a huge empire which included most of West Asia, Anatolia and Egypt — one of the most extensive empires of the ancient world. Parsa, which more or less corresponds to the province of Fars in modern Iran, was called Persis by the ancient Greeks. Since Parsa or Persis was the homeland of the Achaemenids, their empire came to be known as the Persian Empire and Iran itself was identified with Persia (Iran was referred to as Persia till very recently). Thus in antiquity the place of origin of the Achaemenids was adopted as the name for the entire Iranian plateau by the Greeks and subsequently by other peoples as well.

In this Unit, we will discuss some of the salient features of this empire. The expansion and consolidation of this biggest empire of the region was

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

accomplished in a span of fifty years. The administrative apparatus and the system of control on the extensive territories was one of the major achievements. This was achieved through developing a mechanism of decentralized governance. We will study the growth of languae and means of communication and development of a common language in such a heterogeneous region. We will devote some space to the standardization of monetary system and coinage which was probably the first such attempt covering such vast territories as in Persian empire. We will also discuss growth of a new religion and tradition of religious tolerance a unique achievement during this age.

4.2 EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE EMPIRE

The territorial expansion and consolidation of the Persian Empire was accomplished in more than fifty years. A number of rulers contributed in the whole process. However, Cyrus the great and Darius I stand out as the key figures in the process of expansion and consolidation.

4.2.1 Cyrus

After Cyrus (generally referred to as Cyrus the Great to distinguish him from other rulers of the same name) had overthrown Astyages he continued with many of the features of the Median state. Like the Medes the Persians too were initially a confederacy of several Iranian tribes settled in Parsa. They were closely linked with the Medes. The overthrow of Astyages did not imply a sudden disruption of the Median state. Cyrus combined in his person the unified kingship of the Median and Persian tribal confederacies. In view of the active support which Cyrus had received from a section of the Median aristocracy in the struggle against Astyages, he allowed the Median elite to have a share in political power. The Median aristocracy was not immediately dislodged and continued to perform various functions in the new Achaemenid state. Over a period of time the Persian element became more pronounced in the governance of the empire. Simultaneously, the state became more centralized and monarchy as an institution became more powerful.

Having stabilized his position Cyrus immediately embarked upon an ambitious programme of expansion. The Achaemenids rapidly filled the political vacuum that had been created in West Asia by the disappearance of the Assyrian empire. Their expansion, however, was on a much bigger scale. The Babylonians were unable to consolidate their hold over the territorial acquisitions of Nebuchadnezzar II. In fact Babylon seems to have lacked the resources to build an empire that could have lasted for a long duration. The Medes under Astyages had already begun to encroach upon Babylonian possessions. The successors of Nebuchadnezzar II were unable to resist these onslaughts. They eventually succumbed to the Achaemenids who became the real successors to the Assyrian empire.

Cyrus first concentrated on the conquest of Anatolia. The Median rulers had been attempting to subdue the states of Anatolia, especially the kingdom of Lydia. There were at this time several states in Anatolia, of which Lydia was the most powerful. This was one of the states that had emerged in the region after the collapse of the Hittite empire. The Lydian language was closely related to the Hittite language. Croesus, who ruled over Lydia from 561 to 545 BC, was responsible for making Lydia the paramount power in western Anatolia. Lydia under Croesus is credited with having been the first state in history to issue coins on a regular basis.

Croesus exercised nominal suzerainty over the Greek settlements on the west coast of Anatolia. These Greeks were collectively referred to as Ionians (see Unit 12). The Ionians lived in self-governing city-states. They had formed a confederacy to pool together their resources and defend themselves. Cyrus first tried to persuade the Ionians to revolt against Lydia. When this strategy failed he invaded Lydia and succeeded in defeating Croesus in 545 BC. Lydia, and with it most of western Anatolia, became a part of the Achaemenied Empire. Following this the Ionian states were also annexed. Cyrus's territories now extended to the shores of the Aegean Sea. During the next fifty years the Achaemenids launched a series of military expeditions to bring the entire Aegean and mainland Greece under their control. In Anatolia Sardis, the capital of the erstwhile Lydian Kingdom, became the seat of Achamenid authority in the region.

The next phase of Achaemenid expansion resulted in the conquest of Mesopotamia. We have already referred to the decline of the New Babylonian Empire under the successors of Nebuchadnezzar II. Nabonidus (556-539 BC) was the reigning Babylonian king at the time of Cyrus. Babylon was invaded and captured by Cyrus in 539 BC. This was a major event in the history of ancient West Asia and is mentioned in many contemporary records including the Old Testament and a cuneiform inscription dating back to the time of Nabonidus (called the 'Nabonidus Chronicle'). Cyrus allowed the Jews who had been deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar II to return to their homeland. This might have been related to his policy to create a friendly buffer between Egypt and the Achaemenid possessions in Syria-Palestine. Nevertheless his action earned him the reputation of being a just and tolerant ruler. Cyrus pursued a liberal policy with regard to the religious and cultural traditions of many of the people he conquered. Apart from facilitating the return of the Jews, he showed respect for Babylonian traditions. Contemporary Greek writers also speak favourably of him. Cyrus seems to have been generally held in high esteem in antiquity.

With the victory over Babylon, all of Mesopotamia as well as Babylonian territories in Syria-Palestine were incorporated within the Achaemenid Empire. This completed the shift in political gravity in West Asia from Mesopotamia to Iran, a process which had started under the Medes. We do not possess much information about Achaemenid expansion in the east under Cyrus. It is likely that Bactria (Bakhtrish) was added to the empire and that by the time Cyrus died Achaemenid rule extended to the Hindukush mountains.

4.2.2 Cambyses

Cyrus died in 529 BC while on a military expedition. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses (Kambujiya), 529-522 BC. Not much is known about the brief reign of Cambyses, except that he was mainly preoccupied with campaigns in Egypt. Under Cambyses Egypt was added to the Achaemenid Empire. He invaded Egypt c. 525 and quickly defeated the Egyptian ruler Psamtek III, who belonged to the XXVIth Dynasty of Egypt, also called the Saite dynasty after Sais which was the place of origin of the dynasty. The Saite dynasty was already on the verge of collapse due to internal problems. This might account for the ease with which Cambyses conquered Egypt.

Later Greek accounts of Cambyses are highly prejudiced. They portray him as a mad and tyrannical ruler who had no respect for Egyptian traditions. This is not confirmed by the Egyptian evidence that has come to light in the past few decades. Cambyses took over the throne as a traditional Egyptian ruler and adopted the symbols associated with the pharaohs in order to legitimize his authority. Persian rule over Egypt lasted for nearly two centuries, i.e. till Alexander the Great's conquest. In the context of Egyptian history the Achaemenids are designated as the XXVIIth Dynasty, indicating an element of continuity from the Saite to the Persian period.

Cambyses is supposed to have undertaken a series of military expeditions into some of the areas surrounding Egypt proper. Most of these expeditions seem to have ended disastrously. These setbacks undermined his position in Iran itself. The last days of Cambyses are shrouded in mystery but the available evidence indicates that he was faced with revolts in his homeland. The long absence of the king from Iran and reports of his military failures must have encouraged these revolts. Cambyses died in 522 BC while still in the midst of dealing with the upheaval. The events following his death are even more confusing. This confusion is largely due to the fact that soon after the death of Cambyses a different branch of the Achaemenids usurped power. The political crisis in the Achaemenid state towards the end of Cambyses's reign facilitated this development. It is hardly surprising that in this situation different versions of what actually happened were put forward.

According to one version a person by the name of Gaumata declared himself as king. Gaumata is said to have claimed that actually he was Smerdis (Bardiya), the younger brother of Cambyses. A group of nobles then killed the fake Smerdis (i.e. Gaumata). This version holds that Smerdis had already been killed by Cambyses much earlier and that Gaumata was impersonating Smerdis. Another version states that Cambyses was succeeded by Smerdis, who had not been killed, and that it was the real Smerdis who was overthrown. In any case it is clear that there was a conspiracy by some of the prominent Achaemenid officials (referred to in contemporary records as the conspiracy of 'seven' nobles). The leader of this conspiracy was Darius I (Darayavaus). The coup was successful and Darius I became the ruler of the Achaemenid Empire in 522 BC.

4.2.3 Darius I

Darius I (522-486 BC) was the son of Hystaspes (Vishtaspa), who was a leading Persian official, probably a provincial governor. Hystaspes was descended from a collateral branch of the Achaemenids. It was this branch which ruled from 522 BC onwards. Darius I was the most outstanding of the Achaemenid rulers. Under him the extensive territories acquired by Cyrus and Cambyses were systematically organized to create a stable empire. Till about 519 BC Darius was engaged in restoring order and reasserting Achaemenid authority in regions which were in rebellion. It may be mentioned here that after the death of Cambyses the Medes had attempted to break away from the Persian Empire and Gaumata/Smerdis had the support of the old Median aristocracy of Ecbatana. Within a year of occupying the throne Darius had put down the Median revolt.

Darius continued the process of expansion, both in the east and the west. In the east the empire extended upto the Hindukush mountains and the outlying territories in this region were properly integrated with the empire. In the west a large part of the Aegean Sea and perhaps Thrace came under Persian control.

Efforts were made to strengthen Persian control over coastal areas in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Aegean Sea. Ships were stationed in the Persian Gulf and a navy was maintained off the Anatolian coast. It should be borne in mind that the military strength of the Persians lay primarily in their land-based army. Darius also carried out campaigns in the Greek peninsula, but was unable to annex the states of mainland Greece. For the Greeks of the classical period (c. 500-338 BC) the Persians were a constant political and military factor to be reckoned with.

The historian Herodotus who wrote an account, in Greek, of the encounter between the Persians and the Greeks is a major source for the Achaemenids. Herodotus was born c. 485 BC at Halicarnassus located on the south-west coast of Anatolia. Halicarnassus was an Achaemenid territory. His famous history is essentially a narrative of the westward expansion of the Persian empire. Herodotus had travelled widely (Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc.) before writing his account. Most of his information about Persia was derived from contemporary Greek sources and from some prominent people who had been connected with the Persian court. Another Greek source, though not very reliable, is the Persica of Ctesias. Ctesias belonged to Cnidus, situated just south of Halicarnassus in south-western Anatolia. He was taken as a prisoner by the Persians during the course of a military campaign and became a doctor at the Persian court, where he stayed for about seventeen years (till c. 397 BC). His account is frequently at variance with that of Herodotus. The consensus among modern scholars is that much of the information contained in Persica is inaccurate.

Darius I himself has left behind a record of the opening years of his reign in the form of a large trilingual inscription carved on the face of a cliff at Behistun in western Iran. This inscription, known as the ‘Behistun inscription’, is in the Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian (Akkadian) languages. It provided the key for the decipherment of the cuneiform script. The inscription is accompanied by a massive relief carving of Darius. The Behistun inscription and Herodotus’s history are the two main written sources for this period.

We have noted that Herodotus was largely concerned with Persian military campaigns against Greek states. At this time the Greek-speaking world consisted of numerous states which were spread over a sizable area extending from western Anatolia in the east to southern Italy in the west and included the Aegean islands, Thrace, the Greek peninsula, Crete and Sicily. Sparta and Athens were the two most prominent states on the mainland. They were also militarily the most significant (see Unit 12). Anatolia was already a part of the Achaemenid Empire and the Persians had acquired a foothold in the Greek world by subjugating the Ionian states. The Persian attempt to establish supremacy over the Greeks was a prolonged affair which continued almost till the end of the classical period. However Persian military campaigns in mainland Greece were confined to the beginning of the classical period.

As soon as Darius had put down rebellions in the empire he embarked on an expedition in Thrace (c. 513 BC). He crossed the Sea of Marmara into Europe and placed a Persian garrison at the southern extremity of Thrace. At the same time he sent messengers to various Greek states, including Sparta, demanding that they acknowledge him as their ruler. The Greek response to this move was not favourable. Subsequently Darius had to turn his attention to the Ionian states in Anatolia. These states revolted against the Persians in 499 BC. The

Ionian revolt lasted for about six years and was eventually crushed. The support extended to the Ionians by some states of the Greek mainland became one of the reasons for Darius to launch a full-scale invasion of the mainland. The coast of Thrace had been secured earlier and from here the Persians moved into Macedonia and then southwards in the direction of Athens. There is reason to believe that the elite of many Greek states were won over by the Persians and that they were integrated into the empire by being given leading positions in regional administration and the army. Nevertheless Darius's invasion ended in failure. The Persian army was defeated by the Athenians at the battle of Marathon (490 BC).

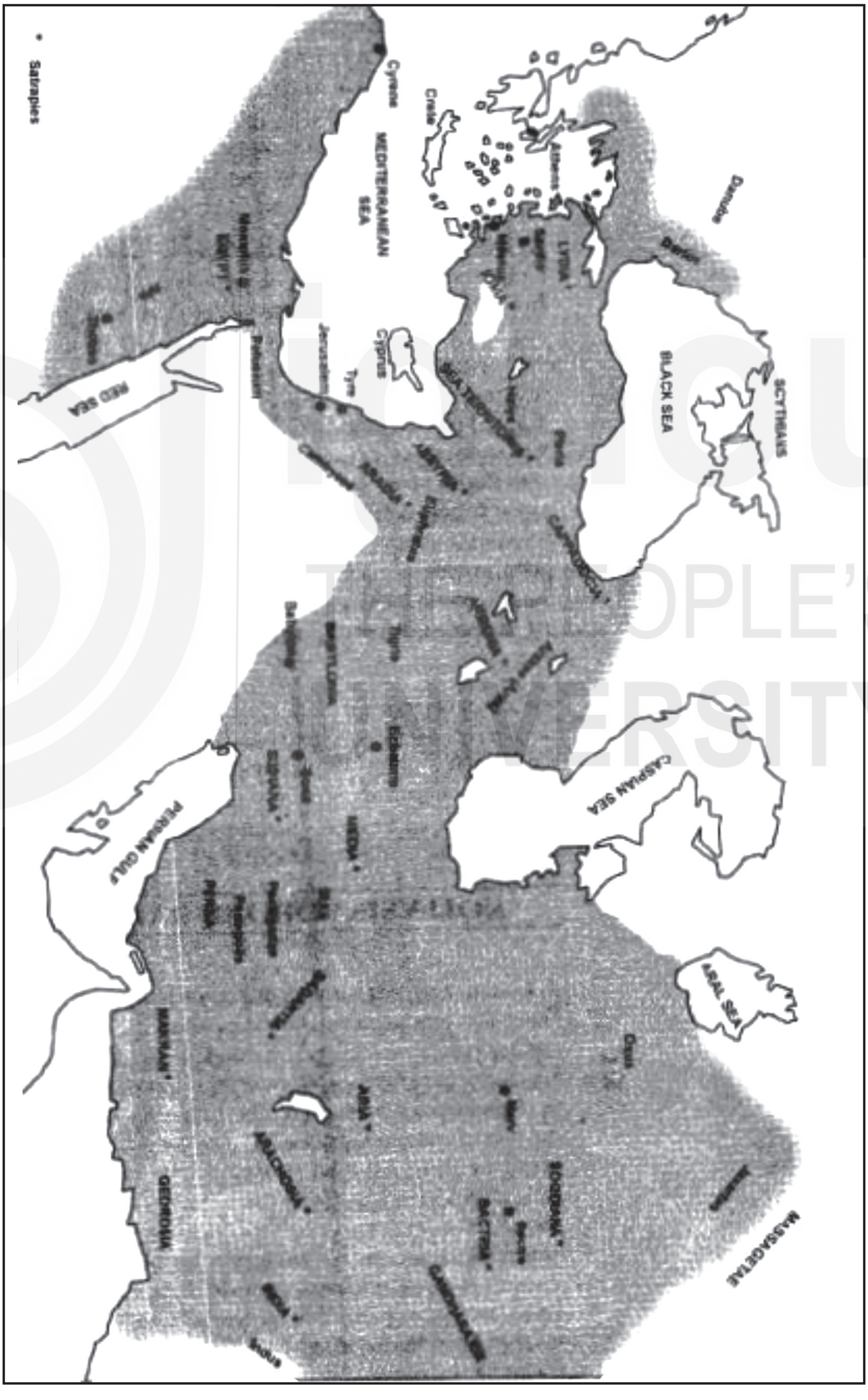
Following the death of Darius I in 486 BC his son and successor Xerxes I (Khshayarsha), 486-465 BC, renewed the invasion of the Greek mainland. He made elaborate arrangements for this purpose. These included setting up supply depots, laying of roads, construction of bridges, and securing allies. Xerxes attempted a two-pronged attack from both land and sea. The Persians were routed at sea by the Athenian navy in the battle of Salamis (480 BC). This was the turning point of the war. It dashed Persian hopes of controlling the Aegean Sea. The battle of Salamis was followed by a decisive victory of the combined Greek armies on land, at Plataea (479 BC). At Plataea the Greek troops were led by Sparta. The Persians completely withdrew from the Greek mainland after these reverses. Though there were no further military offensives into this region, from the point of view of the Greeks the Achaemenids continued to be a factor. Moreover, given their presence in Anatolia the Persians tried to interfere in Greek affairs whenever they got an opportunity to do so. For several decades during the fourth century BC they enjoyed a position of virtual hegemony over the Greek states. Yet in territorial terms Anatolia marked the extremity of the empire in the west.

4.3 ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

During the rule of Darius I the Persian Empire was the largest empire of the period. Its territorial expansion included Asia minor, Armenia, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Northern part of Arabia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tazakistan, Macedon, parts of Indus Valley and a number of smaller regions. Administrative governance of such a vast empire required an effective administrative apparatus. Darius I set about to undertake the job.

His lasting achievement was reorganization of the Achaemenid Empire. He welded into a compact political unit the farflung territories inherited by him. A regular system of tribute realization was instituted in order to ensure sufficient resources for supporting the centralized administrative structure of the state and a large army. A powerful monarchical state emerged under Darius with a vast amount of wealth concentrated in the hands of a very small ruling elite. This elite was increasingly drawn from prominent Persian families (especially the immediate family of Darius) who now completely monopolized political power, at least at the central level. The prestige and authority of the king was crucial for legitimizing the enormous power exercised by the imperial elite. An elaborate court ceremonial emphasized the majesty of the king. The evolution of the monarchical state under the Achaemenids was influenced by Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian monarchical traditions. In turn Achaemenid traditions were adopted or imitated by later rulers including Alexander the Great and his successors.

A prominent feature of the organization of the Achaemenid Empire was its division into a number of provinces governed by 'satraps' (khshatrapavan). Greek texts use the term 'satrapy' to designate a Persian province. The division of the empire into satrapies goes back to the Median era when these units corresponded to the respective conquered lands. Darius I made satrapies the basic unit of administration at the provincial level. Henceforth the boundaries of satrapies did not necessarily coincide with the original boundaries of conquered lands. However, they were often named after the principal people who inhabited them. A satrap could be a semi-autonomous provincial ruler or


• Satrapies
Cyrene
Crete
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Athens
LYDIA
Danube
BLACK SEA
SCYTHIANS
CYPRUS
Jerusalem
Tyre
RED SEA
EGYPT
CAPPADOCIA
BABYLONIA
CASPIAN SEA
PERSIAN GULF
MEDIA
ARAL SEA
Oxus
ARIA
ARACHOSIA
GEDROSIA
SOGDIANA
BACTRIA
MASSAGETAE
INDIA

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

a high official appointed by the king. In either case satraps had wide-ranging authority within their own domains, but were subject to overall supervision by the imperial government through civil and military officials appointed directly by the king.

Herodotus enumerates twenty satrapies while the Behistun inscription has a list of twenty-three satrapies. Some of these can be easily identified—as for example Parsa (Persis), Babairus (Babylon), Yauna (Ionia), Mada (Media), Armina (Armenia), Sparda (Sardis, i.e. Lydia), Parthava (Parthia), and Bakhtrish (Bactria). As has been pointed out some of these satrapies were already established prior to Darius. Darius gave to the satrapies a concrete shape as units of provincial administration. It was in this form that the satrapies survived for several centuries, though with some modifications. Alexander took over the satrapy structure when he conquered the Persian Empire and the structure remained more or less intact in the successor states as well.

The ruler enjoyed the absolute power over the territories of the empire through the army and appointment of Satraps. The Satraps were supposed to keep regular contact with the rulers through frequent correspondence. The kings had special officials to keep a vigil called 'listners' the ears of the king. They sent reports from provinces. The Satraps were to look after local administration, maintain law and order and contingents of Army.

The large size of the Satrapies at times made Satraps powerful and encouraged them to rebel. The situation demanded regular attention of the ruler because of the vast size of the empire.

The organization of a powerful army also provided the king with striking capability and help in suppressing the rebellions. The Persians formed the core of the army with men from other nationalities joining in. The elite group of the army most loyal to the king was termed 'Imperishable Ten Thousand' comprising of Persian spearmen and cavalry.

The empire was territorially too large to be efficiently governed from a single fixed capital. The king usually found it necessary to move one major administrative centre to another. This was particularly the case with the early Achaemenid rulers. Once Achaemenid rule had stabilized under Darius and his successors, preference was increasingly shown for Susa (Shush) in south-western Iran. Darius built a large palace at Susa and in the following centuries this city was the 'normal recognized centre of government' of the Achaemenids. Babylon retained its prominence both due to its strategic location and its historical importance. Babylon was, in fact, the foremost urban centre of the empire. In Parsa proper the Achaemenids developed an impressive imperial city which was known to the Greeks as Persepolis (modern Takhi-i-Jamshid). Darius and his successors constructed a series of grand palaces at Persepolis. This city primarily served a ceremonial purpose. This was the place where the kings celebrated the New Year festival and where local chieftains made ritual offerings of tribute. It has been suggested that the main treasury of the Achaemenid rulers was located at Persepolis. The magnificent royal city was destroyed by Alexander the Great, but the remains which still survive point towards the huge dimensions of the palace. Large blocks of stone were used to construct the palace. The walls are decorated with relief carvings. There were several rows of pillars. Persepolis is one of the finest examples of Achaemenid art and architecture.

The Achaemenid rulers were buried near Persepolis, at a place called Naqsh-i-Rustam. Persepolis was situated close to the city of Pasargadae which was founded by Cyrus the Great as the capital of the Persian Empire. Under the early Achaemenids the old Median capital, Ecbatana, still had considerable significance as an administrative centre. As already noted, Sardis was the main centre of Achaemenid government in western Anatolia.

4.4 SYSTEM OF COINAGE

The Achaemenids ruled over an empire which was inhabited by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. It is remarkable that they were able to keep the empire unified over a long period of time despite this diversity and heterogeneity. Darius introduced a uniform coinage, standardized weights and measures, and promoted a new script to make the empire more cohesive. A uniform coinage with a high level of metallic purity promotes economic activities and exchange. At the same time circulation of this currency over a wide area is an assertion of political authority. The conquest of Lydia, the first state in history to issue coins on a regular basis, had a profound impact on Achaemenid monetary development.

The striking of coins was at this time a relatively new phenomenon. Issuing of coins by the state implied stamping pieces of precious metal (in convenient units of predetermined size, weight and purity) with symbols that signified the authority of the government and guaranteed the value of each piece. This was preceded by, and closely linked to, a long process of standardization of weights and measures. Over a period of nearly two centuries the Assyrian and Babylonian empires had achieved such standardization. The Achaemenids inherited the Babylonian standard that was widely prevalent in most of West Asia. Silver was the main standard for worth, i.e. the value of other precious metals as well as goods was measured in terms of their value in relation to silver. The metal was used for exchange without being coined. Fine silver was simply weighed for the purpose of exchange. Nevertheless the standardization of weights was crucial for developing a generally acceptable system of determining the worth of goods for exchange, and was an important prerequisite for the introduction of coinage.

The Babylonian weight standard was based on a sexagesimal system of multiples (the origins of which go back to the Sumerian civilization) in which 1 biltu (‘talent’) of 29,472 grams equaled 60 manu (‘minae’); 1 manu of 491.2 grams equaled 60 shiqlu (‘shekels’); and 1 shiqlu of 8.18 grams equaled 2 zuzu (‘drachmae’). This standard was revised by Darius I (c. 515 BC) so that henceforth the weight of the talent was 30,240 grams, that of the mina was 504 grams and that of the shekel was 8.40 grams. The coins of Darius were based on the revised shekel. Coinage was an innovation which the Achaemenids borrowed from the Lydians.

A somewhat different system had evolved in western Anatolia, especially under Lydian influence. Here gold (often in an impure form), rather than silver, was initially the standard for worth. The earliest coins to be issued were struck out of an alloy of gold and silver (electrum). Electrum was available as a natural alloy in many parts of western Anatolia. Lydia and probably some of the Greek settlements in Anatolia began issuing electrum coins around 600 BC. By the time of Croesus Lydia had a bimetallic currency. Croesus is credited with this reform. This meant that both gold and silver coins were issued and that the state established a fixed exchange rate between the two. The fixed rate of exchange between gold and silver as metals was expressed in the form of a guaranteed exchange rate between gold and silver coins.

When Lydia was annexed by the Achaemenids the type of gold and silver coins which were most common in the region were of a type referred to by historians as ‘light Croeseids’. These were struck separately in gold (weight 8.05 grams) and silver (weight 5.40 grams). The ‘light Croeseids’ remained in circulation within Persian territories in the west for several years after the conquest of Lydia, and were even minted by the Achaemenids for some time. It was under Darius that coins of a different design began to be issued — both in silver and gold. These were the first truly Achaemenid coins and were minted at Sardis, the former capital of Lydia and headquarters of the Persian territories in western Anatolia. The silver coins were known to the Greeks as siglos (from shiqlu or shekel, though their actual weight was different), while the gold coins of Darius are referred to as ‘Darics’. The gold Darics conformed to the shekel and weighed 8.40 grams (the weight of the revised shekel) while the silver siglos were of the same weight as the former silver Croeseids (5.40 grams). The exchange rate was 1 gold Daric = 20 silver sigloi. The evidence from coin hoards indicates that the circulation of coins issued by Darius and his successors remained confined mostly to the western portions of the empire, particularly Anatolia. Apart from Achaemenid coins Athenian coins too were in circulation in this region. In other parts of the empire uncoined precious metal remained the medium of exchange.

The standardization of coinage, weights and measures helped the trading activities. A unified large empire with comparative security provided markets for large scale trading activities. We get evidence of fairly good quality artisanal production with craftsmen of different nationalities engaged in production of goods.

4.5 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

In order to rule over an empire inhabited by so many different linguistic groups the Achaemenids needed to evolve a link language which would facilitate communication. Darius actively pursued a policy for encouraging the development of such a link language. It is generally recognized that the most widely spoken language of the empire was Aramaic. Aramaic was originally spoken by some of the tribes living in northern Mesopotamia. The use of Aramaic had steadily grown in the Assyrian empire and the language had subsequently penetrated the New Babylonian Empire. In other words, Aramaic (with the various dialects derived from it) was already spoken by a large proportion of the population in Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine by the time the Persian Empire came into being. What is more, Aramaic had emerged as the main language of trade in West Asia. It is not surprising that Darius and his successors promoted the use of Aramaic throughout the empire. An Aramaic script had also evolved which, because of its simplicity, could be used for a variety of purposes. This was an alphabetic script of twenty letters. It was derived from the Phoenician script and influenced the development of many other scripts of West Asia, including Hebrew.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Whereas Aramaic was essentially the language of the common people, the language of the Achaemenid elite was a form of Persian which is designated as Old Persian. This may be regarded as the official language of the Achaemenid state. Old Persian was the language used in inscriptions and royal proclamations. The cuneiform script of the Mesopotamians was modified for writing Old Persian. Darius categorically states in one of his inscriptions that he invented a new cuneiform script. Though the process of adapting cuneiform to suit the requirements of Old Persian might have begun earlier it was probably completed under Darius. However, Aramaic (both language and script) was the main language of official documents and day-to-day imperial communication. The Aramaic script was sometimes also used for writing Old Persian. It needs to be noted that several other languages (Elamite, Babylonian, Egyptian etc.) were routinely used for official purposes, of which the trilingual Behistun inscription is an outstanding example.

4.6 RELIGION

The fast expansion of the Persian Empire brought a large number of territories inhabited by people of different faiths and beliefs. The attitude of the Achaemenid state was open towards them. The Achaemenid state had a well-deserved reputation for religious tolerance. Although by the time of Darius I Zoroastrianism had become the dominant creed of the Persian elite, the religious traditions of the several communities which inhabited the empire continued to thrive. This was a key element of Achaemenid policy towards the conquered people's right since the time of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus definitely seems to have protected local cults as is apparent from his support to the Jews. He also helped to rebuild some of the sacred shrines of the Babylonians, for example the temple of the moon-god at Ur.

Personally Cyrus might have accepted some Zoroastrian rituals, but we have little information on this point. It is certain that under Darius Zoroastrianism had come to occupy a prominent place in the religious life of the Persian ruling class. The rise of Zoroastrianism goes back to the seventh century, or perhaps even earlier, when the prophet Zarathustra (Zardusht, Zarat-ushtra) taught the main tenets of this religion. Most scholars are of the view that Zarathustra lived and preached in north-eastern Iran. The semi-nomadic people of this area were his earliest followers. From here the ideas and beliefs of Zarathustra spread to other parts of Iran. We know that Zoroastrianism had made a lot of progress among the Medes.

During the course of its evolution Zoroastrianism incorporated some of the older Iranian religious traditions, including some aspects of polytheism. Zarathustra had taught a monotheistic doctrine, the fundamental feature of which was the worship of Ahura-Mazdah. As this doctrine developed, the universe was seen as being governed by two opposing forces. On the one hand are the forces of light and goodness, and on the other are the forces of darkness and evil. A cosmic struggle is constantly going on between the two. The forces of light and righteousness are represented by Ahura-Mazdah. Ahura-Mazdah is worshipped as the divine creator and lord of wisdom. The worship of fire is an important component of Zoroastrian ritual. Fire symbolizes light in the struggle against darkness. Subsequently some other divinities were accommodated within Zoroastrianism. It is significant that whereas Darius usually projected himself as a worshipper of Ahura-Mazdah he patronized some ancient Iranian cults as well.

Despite his adherence to Zoroastrianism Darius continued with the liberal policy of Cyrus. He is known to have respected Greek gods and goddesses. A Greek inscription from Darius's reign records his regard for Apollo. The successors of Darius too, by and large, left non-Iranian cults undisturbed. At the same time Zoroastrianism emerged as the official religion of the state. In other words it became an integral part of the state apparatus. This development was linked to the growing importance of the Magi, a hereditary priestly class which began to monopolize Zoroastrian rituals especially at the official level. The Magi had become quite powerful under Xerxes and their influence continued to grow. However the religious outlook of the Achaemenid state remained remarkably eclectic right till the end.

4.7 DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

The Achaemenid Empire flourished for more than 200 years with minor ups and downs. Every time a ruler died there was some sort of upheaval in different satrapies. The revolts in different regions occurred intermittently and were suppressed. Skirmishes on the borders were also taking place and making small dents but by and large the empire remained intact. The biggest blow came in the form of the attack of Alexander.

The Achaemenid Empire came to an end as a result of the invasion of Persian territories by Alexander the Great. The Achaemenid ruler at this time was Darius III (336-331 BC). Alexander inflicted a series of defeats on the Persian army, beginning with the battle of Granicus (334 BC) in western Anatolia. Following this battle western Anatolia became a Macedonian territory. Subsequently Alexander moved toward Syria and defeated the Persian army led by Darius III at Issus (333 BC). Egypt was taken in 331 BC. Alexander then marched towards the Tigris and after crossing it defeated Darius at the battle of Gaugamela (331 BC). While Darius fled to Ecbatana, Alexander captured Babylon, Susa and Persepolis. As a symbolic act, marking the end of the Persian empire, Alexander ravaged the city of Persepolis. Darius himself was assassinated in 330 BC. Alexander the Great's conquests in effect amounted to the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. The consequences of these conquests will be discussed in the next Unit in the context of the history of ancient Greece.

4.8 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have discussed the process of the expansion and consolidation of the largest Persian empire of the period. Cyrus and Darius I played a key role in its formation. The division of the empire into administrative units called satrapies provided it certain stability. Satraps worked as an organized bureaucracy to sustain it. Standardization of the coinage and safe transportation of merchandise gave a fillip to economic activity.

Darius and his successors promoted Aramaic as a link language for the empire. Zoroastrianism which incorporated some of the older Iranian traditions became the most dominant religion. However, it was not forced on all regions of the empire and state followed a policy of high degree of religious tolerance.

The empire after flourishing for more than 200 years declined as a result of the invasion of the Alexander the Great around 334 BC. The empire gradually disintegrated. In the 3rd Century A.D. we again witness the rise of another mighty empire – the Sasanid Empire in Iran.

4.9 EXERCISES

1) How did Cyrus and Darius I expand the Persian Empire?

2) Write a note on administrative organization of the Persian Empire.

3) Briefly discuss the system of coinage and the evolution of Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 5 ANCIENT GREECE

Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Geographical Features
5.3 The Early Greek Civilizations
  5.3.1 The Minoan Civilization
  5.3.2 The Mycenaean Civilization
  5.3.3 The Dark Age
5.4 The Archaic and Classical Period
  5.4.1 Conflict of Landed Aristocracy and Peasantry: Reforms Start
  5.4.2 Transition to Democracy
  5.4.3 Conflict with Persia: Formation of Delian League
  5.4.4 Democratic Political Structure: Emergence of Deme
  5.4.5 Slave Labour
  5.4.6 Development of Philosophical Thought
  5.4.7 The End of the Classical Period
5.5 Summary
5.6 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While the Achaemenids were building a vast empire which extended in the west to the shores of the Aegean Sea and included many Greek settlements of Anatolia, in Greece itself a brilliant civilization was taking shape. The pattern of development of ancient Greece represents an exception during the age of empires. Greece was unique in that it was the centre of a great civilization but did not develop into an empire or even a territorially large political state. The historical experience of Greece therefore needs to be examined from the point of view of its distinctiveness.

Circa 500 BC marks the beginning of the classical age of Greece, the most glorious phase of ancient Greek civilization. The classical age lasted from c. 500 BC to the Macedonian conquest of the Greek states in 338 BC. The classical age represented the culmination of a long historical process during which the foundations of Greek civilization were laid. By about 2000 BC the large island of Crete in Greece had emerged as the centre of the first Bronze Age civilization in Europe. This was the Minoan civilization which flourished between 2000 and 1400 BC.

In our discussion in this Unit first we will familiarize you with the geographical spread of the Greek Civilization. This would be followed by a chronological development of Greek civilization. This has been divided into two major sections i.e. i) Early Greek Civilization and ii) Archaic and Classical Period. The former has three main epochs the Minoan Civilization, the Mycenaean

Civilization and the Dark Age. The latter has been discussed together in one section. In this section, we have taken note of specific developments and features of whole period. The most important feature of the period is conflict of landed aristocracy with peasants, and transition to democracy. Formation of Delian league and emergence of Deme are other important events. In the end a brief account of the development of philosophical thought in Greece would be provided.

5.2 GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Before we proceed to examine the evolution of Greek civilization it would be useful to outline the geographical features of Greece. It should be noted that when we speak of ancient Greece we are referring to an area that was much larger than the present-day state of Greece. The Greek world in antiquity encompassed western Anatolia, Thrace, the islands of the Aegean Sea, Crete, Cyprus, mainland Greece, southern Italy and Sicily.

Mainland Greece is an irregularly shaped peninsula in south-eastern Europe, enclosed by the Ionian Sea in the west, the Aegean Sea in the east and the Mediterranean Sea in the south. The southern part of the peninsula is in the shape of a palm which extends into the Mediterranean. This is known as the pelosponnese. The Peloponnese is almost an island, separated from the rest of the mainland by the Gulf of Corinth. A thin strip of land connects the north-eastern corner of the Peloponnese with the mainland. The prominent ancient city of Corinth is located at the junction of the Peloponnese and continental Greece. Beyond the narrow strip of land which forms the bridge between the Peloponnese and the mainland lies the region of Attica in the east. Attica is bound by the Aegean Sea on all sides. Athens is situated in Attica. To the north-west of Attica is the area called Boeotia. Thebes was the dominant city of Boeotia. Further north, along the Aegean coast, is the region of Thessaly. Moving in a clockwise direction from Thessaly we come to Macedonia and Thrace. Macedonia was the home of Alexander the Great. Thrace, part of which now constitutes the European zone of Turkey, is the easternmost part of southern Europe. It is separated from Asia by the Sea of Marmara. Crossing the Sea of Marmara brings one to western Anatolia. Western Anatolia and the Greek Peninsula lie on either side of the Aegean Sea.

The Aegean Sea was the geographical nucleus of the ancient Greek world. In the Aegean Sea itself there are a large number of islands of varying sizes. Off the west coast of Anatolia are some large islands such as Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Rhodes. Then there is a group of islands concentrated in the southern Aegean. The islands of this group are collectively called the Cyclades. The large rectangular island of Crete is situated south of the Peloponnese and the Cyclades. It may be mentioned here that Greek settlers had also colonized some areas of southern Italy and Sicily. These settlers are collectively referred to as Western Greeks.

5.3 THE EARLY GREEK CIVILIZATIONS

The early Greek Civilizations would be discussed in three parts the Minoan Civilization, Mycenaean Civilization and the Dark Age.

5.3.1 The Minoan Civilization

In deciding the chronology of ancient Greece the Minoan Civilization can be considered as the first Bronze Age civilization of the region. The civilization emerged towards the end of third millennium BC and flourished till around 1400 BC. The civilization came to light in the early 20th century through the efforts of Sir Arthus Evans who conducted the diggings in the region. This was named after the legendry king Minos of the Crete mythology. The ruins are available in a number of towns the most prominent being Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia. It seems that palaces were the most prominent structures in these centres. Besides being centres of political authority the palaces were also centres of economic activity.

Sheep rearing and wool production were main produce of rural economy. Wheat, grapes and olives were main agricultural products. The goods were brought from rural areas to the cities for redistribution and trade. It seems that the Minoans had trading links with Egypt, Anatolia, the Lebanese Coast, Cyprus and Aegean through the sea routes. The Minoans had developed writing. The script remains undeciphered. It has been named Linear 'A'. It seems to have been used for trade and exchange.

The Minoan civilization of Crete came to an end around 1400 BC. Natural calamities, triggered by a major volcanic eruption in the southern Aegean, might have caused its sudden collapse. Eventually Crete was overwhelmed by colonizers from mainland Greece who, while they borrowed some aspects of Minoan civilization, developed a new Bronze Age civilization — the Mycenaean civilization.

5.3.2 The Mycenaean Civilization

Whereas Crete was the centre of the Minoan civilization, the Mycenaean civilization was a product of mainland Greece. This civilization, which flourished between c. 1600 and 1200 BC, came to light as a result of the pioneering excavations of Heinrich Schleimann. The civilization is named after the site of Mycenae (Mykenai) situated in the north-western corner of the Peloponnese. Other major Mycenaean sites are Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, Orchomenos and Knossos.

When we speak of the Mycenaeans we are not referring to a single political entity but several distinct settlements which formed separate states. These states were ruled by warrior chiefs. The chiefs usually bore the royal title wanax (or anax) and ruled over their territories from fortified palace complexes which dominated the Mycenaean urban centres. A powerful warrior aristocracy and an elaborate bureaucracy constituted the ruling elite. The fortified palace complexes exercised extensive control over the respective economies of the Mycenaean states through centralized bureaucratic structures. This bureaucracy regulated virtually every aspect of the economy. The Mycenaeans had an extensive foreign trade. Oil, pottery and textiles were their main exports. They imported gold, copper and tin. Society was highly stratified with the ruling elite having access to a large surplus. The Mycenaean chiefs were buried in large beehive shaped tombs (tholoi) or in large chamber tombs. The resources that would have to be mobilized for constructing these tombs, as well as the fine craftsmanship of the objects found in them, leave us in no doubt as to the wealth possessed by many of the Mycenaean chiefs/kings.

The Mycenaeans have left behind abundant written records which provide us with details about the role played by the palaces in the economy. The Mycenaeans evolved a script which is referred to as the Linear B script. The Linear B script was deciphered in 1952 by Michael Ventris. Ventris found that the language of the script was an early version of the Greek language. The Mycenaeans were among the earliest Greek-speaking people to settle in the peninsula. The Greeks were a branch of the Indo-European people and their migrations must be viewed in the context of the tribal movements of the third millennium BC which we have discussed in Unit 10. The language of the Mycenaeans was somewhat different from that spoken by later Greek settlers and is labelled by scholars as 'proto-Greek'. This is the language of the Linear B script.

The Linear B records that have survived are mainly in the form of clay tablets. They are invariably inventories or accounts and contain no references to political history or religious practices. They were obviously compiled by palace officials to keep track of the surprisingly large number of transactions that the palace had to undertake in order to regulate a wide range of economic activities. The fact that the script exhibits a great deal of uniformity throughout the Mycenaean area shows that the bureaucracy, or at least the professional scribes, were drawn from a close-knit group with links extending over several parts of the peninsula.

The Mycenaean civilization lasted till c. 1200 BC. Another round of tribal migrations coincided with the simultaneous collapse of Bronze Age civilizations in the eastern Mediterranean by 1200 BC. In the traditional periodization of ancient Greek history the four centuries from 1200 to 800 BC are referred to as the Dark Age. Mycenaean cities went into decline, the Linear B script disappeared and trade was disrupted. It was traditionally believed that Dorian invasions (Dorians were a Greek-speaking tribe which settled in the southern Peloponnese where Sparta is located) were responsible for the destruction of the Mycenaean civilization, although this picture has now been completely revised. Source material for this period is rather scanty. Hence the term 'Dark Age' is used for this period.

5.3.3 The Dark Age

The Dark Age lasted for nearly four centuries, coming to an end in c. 800 BC. The significance of this date is that around this time two great Greek epics, Iliad and Odyssey were written. Their composition is attributed to a poet by the name of Homer. These epics mark a turning point in Greek history. With Iliad and Odyssey written records are once again available for ancient Greece after a long gap. Apart from their great literary merit, these epics are a very rich historical source. The two works are part of the tradition of epic poetry. The main theme of Iliad is the war of a coalition of Greek states against the state of Troy (the ruins of ancient Troy are located in the northwestern corner of Anatolia). According to the story narrated in the epic this war, known as the Trojan war, lasted for ten years. Odyssey recounts the adventures encountered by Odysseus, one of the heroes of the war, on his homeward journey after the conclusion of the campaign. The epics give us some idea about various aspects of contemporary religion, mythology, beliefs, food habits and dress.

Scholars earlier held the view that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were inspired by events which had taken place in the Mycenaean age and spoke about that period. There can be no doubt that some of the stories in these epics are derived from the

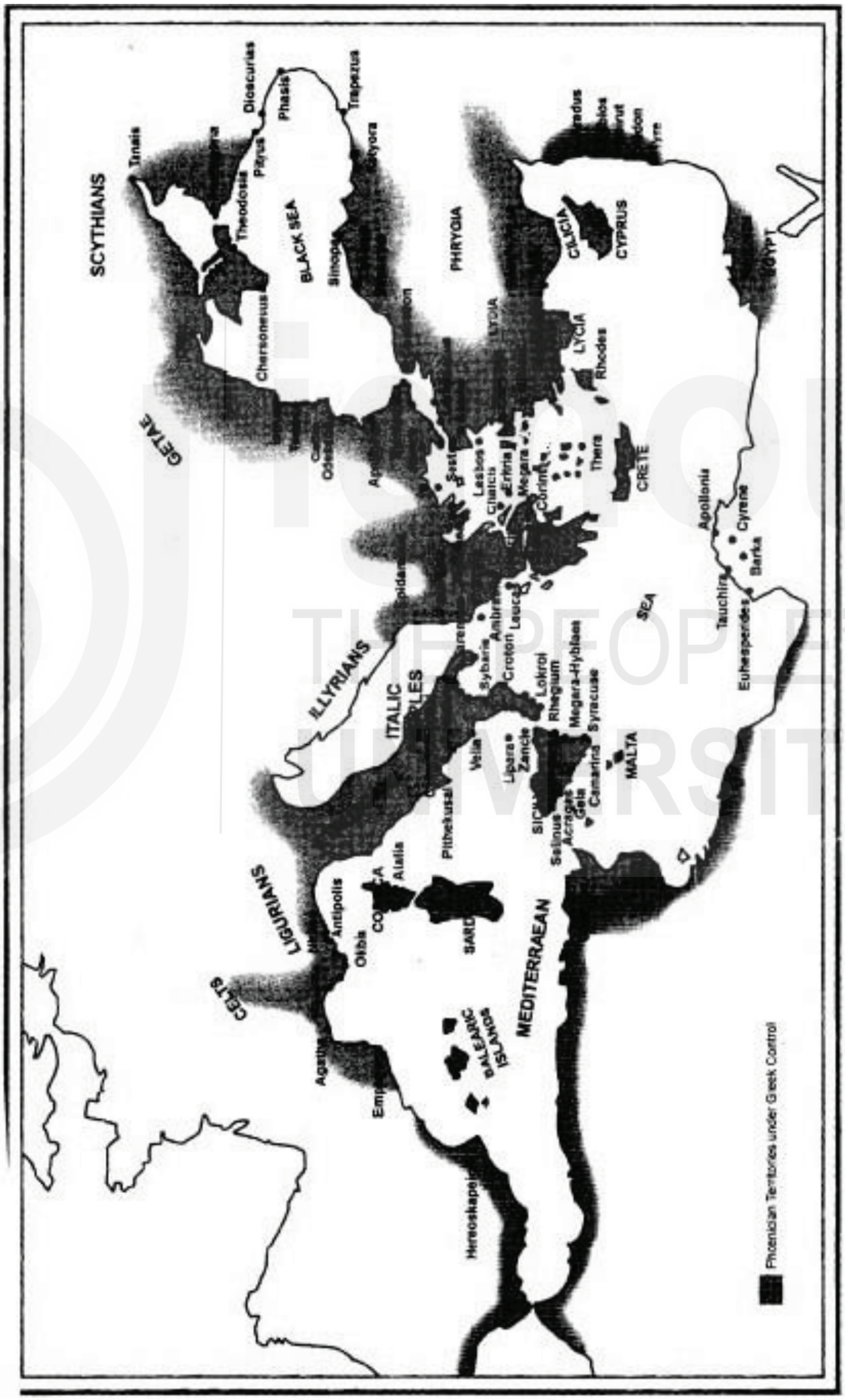
Mycenaean era. They show an awareness of an earlier civilization in which great heroes, kings and warriors lived. It was therefore thought that the Homeric epics were essentially a portrayal of Mycenaean society. The reinterpretation of these poems, particularly in the light of the more exhaustive archaeological evidence, has allowed scholars to view Iliad and Odyssey as compositions of the Dark Age. The actual details of everyday life contained in them relate to the closing phase of the Dark Age and these indicate a break with the Mycenaean social formation.

Historians now divide the Dark Age into two sub-periods: i) 1200 to 1050 BC and ii) 1050 to 800 BC. In the first sub-period Mycenaean urban centres declined and there are signs of extensive depopulation. The archaeological evidence reveals a sharp decline in population between 1300 and 1100 BC. Settlements are fewer and are smaller in size. Tribal migrations, at times violent, were also taking place in this period. The Mycenaean economy based on centralized regulation by the palace bureaucracy collapsed around 1200 BC. With it written records in the Linear B script also disappeared. Long distance trade was disrupted making it difficult to procure copper and tin for producing bronze objects. The reasons for this kind of widespread disintegration are still not clear and continue to be debated by scholars.

A little before 1000 BC a new economy and social structure began to emerge in Greece. By this time tribal migrations had resulted in Greek speaking people occupying the entire peninsula. Simultaneously the Aegean islands and the western coast of Anatolia were incorporated in the Greek linguistic zone. Southern Italy was also in the process of being colonized. The major Greek dialects evolved in this period. There were three major dialects: Ionic, which included the subdialect Attic spoken in Athens; Doric; and Aeolic. A significant feature of this period was the introduction and dissemination of iron technology from c. 1000 BC onwards. This period marks the transition to the iron age. The origins of iron technology remain obscure. However the archaeological evidence that has accumulated over the years indicates that Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia pioneered the use of this metal. It is not difficult to explain the rapid advance of iron in Greece once the technology became available. The people of the area had to depend wholly on imports for their supplies of copper and tin. The decline of eastern Mediterranean trade after 1200 BC created problems for Greek metallurgy because the supply of copper and tin could not be maintained. The introduction of iron offered a viable alternative. Since Greece had adequate deposits of iron ore the Greek states with their limited resources would have preferred the use of this metal rather than exchange their meagre surpluses for imported copper and tin. Iron technology became one of the factors that contributed to the recovery which took place in the period between 1050 and 800 BC.

The end of the Dark Age saw the revival of writing in Greece. We have seen that the Linear B script had already disappeared with the collapse of Mycenaean civilization. When the Greeks began using a script towards the end of the Dark Age it was a new script. This script was borrowed from the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians had evolved a script (c. 1500 BC) which was based on the phonetic principle. The symbols in this script stood for different sounds, i.e. it was an alphabetic script. The Greeks adopted the Phoenician script and modified it to suit their language. The Homeric epics were written in the new Greek alphabet.

Greek society as reflected in the Homeric epics was very different from that of the Mycenaean period. It was simpler, largely self-sufficient with little trade or exchange, and did not have powerful kings. In the latter half of the Dark Age the Greeks were divided into a large number of petty-states. These states were ruled by kings or chiefs with limited authority. They had to share political power with other members of the elite. In many states, such as Athens, monarchical rule had come to an end by the beginning of the Archaic Period and was replaced by oligarchical political structures.


SCYTHIANS
Tanais
Theodosia
Pityus
Dioscurias
Phasis
Trapezus
Kotyora
BLACK SEA
Sinope
Chersonesus
GETAE
PHRYGIA
LYDIA
CILICIA
CYPRUS
LYCIA
Rhodes
EGYPT
Lesbos
Chalcis
Eretria
Megara
Corinth
Thera
CRETE
Apollonia
Cyrene
Barka
Tauchira
Euhesperides
SEA
ILLYRIANS
ITALIC
Ambracia
Leucas
Sybaris
Croton
Lokroi
Rhegium
Megara-Hyblaea
Syracuse
Velia
Lipara
Zancle
Camarina
MALTA
Gela
Acragas
Selinus
Pithekoussai
Alalia
Antipolis
Olbia
LIGURIANS
CELTS
BALEARIC ISLANDS
MEDITERRAEAN
Agatha
Hemeroskopei
Phoenician Territories under Greek Control

5.4 THE ARCHAIC AND CLASSICAL PERIOD

The period following the Dark Age is referred to as the Archaic period (C. 800 – 500 BC). The foundations of classical Greek Civilization were laid in this period. The period from 500 BC to 338 BC is generally referred as the classical age of Greece. Some prominent changes take place in archaic and classical period and need specific dicussion. However, the division into these two periods is not always very sharp and there is lot of overlapping and continuity in various aspects of society, economy and culture. In view of this we would like to discuss it as one broad period of ancient Greece. The developments and institutions of the whole period would be analysed in this section. Wherever the features are clearly demarcated and can be distinctly confined to either of the periods it would be mentioned during the course of our discussion.

5.4.1 Conflict of Landed Aristocracy and Peasantry: Reforms Start

The Archaic Period (c. 800 – 5000 BC) witnessed an intense conflict between the landed aristocracy and the peasantry throughout Greece. The origins of this struggle may be traced to the latter half of the Dark Age when historical changes had placed landowning aristocrats in a strong position. Between c. 800 and 600 BC the landed aristocracy consolidated its hold over land and the political structures of the Greek states. This led to the impoverishment of the small landholders. In their desperation the small landholders put up a tough fight against the aristocracy. The constant upheavals caused by this struggle reached a point of crisis by c. 600 BC. Sections of the aristocracy realized that unless some way was found out of the crisis their own prosperity would be threatened. Consequently they were forced to initiate reforms which incorporated concessions to the peasants.

We have some information on the reforms undertaken at Athens. The evidence from Athens is supplemented by references to other states and shows that similar historical developments were taking place in large parts of Greece. In 594 BC the Athenians resorted to the solution of nominating an arbitrator, named Solon, to carry out reforms. On the basis of a consensus Solon was vested with wide- ranging powers for a specified duration. The most radical reform of Solon was the abolition of debt bondage. This had emerged as one of the most serious problems faced by the peasantry. Impoverished peasants, who often had meagre holdings located in difficult terrain such as hillsides, had to take loans from wealthy landowners. When poor peasants failed to repay their debts they were forced into bondage. Laws pertaining to repayment of loans had stringent provisions which required a person who was unable to pay back a loan to accept bondage to the creditor. Peasants were thus simultaneously being deprived of their land and were being reduced to the status of slaves. The major demands of the peasantry were redistribution of land and abolition of debt bondage. The abolition of debt bondage under Solon implied that henceforth Athenian free peasants could not be enslaved if they failed to repay their loans. The existing debt of the peasants was cancelled.

Nevertheless, Solon did not carry out redistribution of land. He did, however, introduce changes in the political system which gave ordinary Athenians the right to participate in government. We will discuss these later in the context of the evolution of Greek democracy. The abolition of debt bondage prevented the enslavement of the impoverished peasants, but in the absence of land reforms the aristocracy continued to possess a disproportionately large share of cultivable land. After 594 BC there was a shortage of rural labour. The big landowners, who required labour to cultivate their large holdings, solved this problem by increasingly employing slaves brought from outside.

Not surprisingly there were fresh upheavals in Athens within a few decades of Solon's reforms. Similar conditions prevailed in other states where incomplete reforms or no reforms had taken place. In these disturbed conditions some political leaders carried out a series of coups and assumed dictatorial powers in their respective states. This development completely altered the nature of governance in a large number of Greek states. The events at Athens typify the process. Peisistratus was the person responsible for the coup at Athens. He first attempted to seize power in 561, but was unsuccessful and had to flee from the city. He eventually managed to succeed in 545 BC. Peisistratus installed himself as supreme ruler of the city, setting aside existing constitutional arrangements and defying oligarchical institutions.

What was emerging was a new form of government for which contemporaries used the term 'tyranny'. Rulers like Peisistratus who had usurped power in this manner were called 'tyrants'. A significant aspect of Greek tyranny was that it had considerable popular support, mainly from among the impoverished peasantry and from groups which had accumulated wealth through trade but had traditionally no access to political power. When Peisistratus seized power he took over public wastelands that had been occupied by the aristocracy and distributed these among the small or dispossessed peasants. He also confiscated the property of some of the rich landowners who had gone into exile following the establishment of tyranny and gave these to needy farmers. The policies pursued by Peisistratus had a twofold outcome. First, the position of the peasantry was stabilized. Second, the monopoly of the entrenched landed aristocracy over the political structure was broken. Peisistratus died in 527 BC. He was succeeded by his son Hippias.

This appeared to be an attempt to transform tyranny into dynastic rule and caused much resentment among the people. In any case, the historical relevance of tyranny was now over. In 510 BC Hippias was overthrown. This date marks the beginning of classical democracy at Greece.

5.4.2 Transition to Democracy

In the Classical Period, and subsequently, the Greeks referred to the age of tyranny with intense dislike. Yet it should be borne in mind that tyranny speeded up the transition from oligarchical rule to democracy. The tyrants helped to undermine the institutions through which the aristocracy has so far exercised political power. This phenomenon was not confined to Athens alone. At Corinth the tyrant Periander came to power c. 600 BC. A little before Periander, Cypselus had overthrown the Bacchidae--the ruling aristocratic group at Corinth. We also have information about other tyrants. Polycrates became tyrant of Samos c. 545 BC and Lygdamis seized power at Naxos around the same time.

The tyrants were instrumental in doing away with the traditional hereditary basis of political power. The Greek aristocracies were close-knit hereditary elites. They enjoyed power not merely because of their wealth but more significantly by virtue of their birth. The aristocratic families automatically held all executive, judicial, and military positions. That is why we refer to the political structures of the Greek states during the Archaic Period as being oligarchical in nature. The tyrants struck at the roots of this oligarchical control, thereby creating conditions for the transition to democracy. During the course of the Archaic Period a number of Greek states evolved into democracies. Some of the earliest democracies that we have information about were those of Chios and Megara where democratic institutions had come into existence around c. 600 BC.

Even though the degree of democratization varied from state to state, it would not be incorrect to say that in Greece by the beginning of the Classical Period common people participated in the political process to a much greater degree than what we find in other contemporary societies. This was a fundamentally new system of government, especially for societies with class differentiation. *Polis* was the term most frequently used to denote those political entities in ancient Greece which had some aspects of democratic functioning. The forms of government of the various *polis* (plural *poleis*) ranged from purely oligarchical on the one hand, to the mature democracy of Athens on the other. In between stood the states, probably the majority, with elements of oligarchy combined in varying proportions. The states about which we have information do not show any homogeneity in the structure of the *polis*. Athens and Sparta had emerged as the two leading poleis in Greece by the beginning of the Classical Period. The historical evidence is also quite uneven. While we have many details about Athens, and to a lesser extent Sparta, contemporary sources tell us very little about important democracies such as Corinth and Syracuse.

The *polis* was territorially a small political entity. The size of the population was also relatively small. Given the constraints of ancient society, democracy would not have been functional had the *polis* been large either territorially or in terms of its inhabitants. This point needs to be emphasized because Greek democracy was a direct democracy. In modern democracy the people choose their representatives who then legislate and govern on their behalf. In ancient Greece, democracy implied participation by all the citizens in the basic organ of the democratic system, namely the assembly.

The concept of citizenship was a restricted one. Only the indigenous, native, residents of a *polis* (and their descendants) were recognized as citizens. Citizenship rights did not extend to all inhabitants, not even all the free inhabitants. Firstly, women were excluded. Only male adults enjoyed the privilege of being citizens in the political sense. Secondly, all those who were not original residents of the *polis*, or were considered outsiders for some reason or the other (e.g. if they were a conquered community and had been deprived of their political rights), did not form part of the citizen body. In Sparta the free non-citizens were called perioikoi; at Athens they were known as metics (metoikoi). Many of the traders settled at Athens were metics. Of course slaves had no rights whatsoever.

One should add here that only citizens could own land. There was also a close link between citizenship rights and military service. The Greek states did not maintain standing armies of professional soldiers. To a large extent this was because they lacked the resources for financing such an army. All free adult males of the community were expected to render military service. In other words, the citizens were simultaneously soldiers. Citizens had to equip themselves with their fighting gear out of their own resources, something that was possible only if they possessed some land. The backbone of the Greek armies was the hoplite infantry (foot-soldiers). The overwhelming majority of the hoplites were small and middle farmers. We could say that Greek armies were essentially armies of peasant-citizens.

The citizens of the Greek *polis* could exercise their right to participate and vote in the assembly, which was the basic right of citizenship, by personally attending the meetings of the assembly. One had to actually go to the meetings of the assembly, usually held in some open space in the city-centre, in order to exercise this right. Such a conception of democracy would have been unworkable if the respective Greek states possessed a big area or a large population. The actual task of governance was carried out through a smaller body, the council. With the decline of monarchy, real power had passed into the hands of oligarchical councils dominated by the hereditary landed elite.

Given its nature and large size the assembly could not meet very frequently. Even when it met it could only debate and vote on few issues. This gave the council wide ranging authority for intervening in the functioning of the assembly. Usually the council convened the assembly (unless dates were traditionally fixed), prepared its agenda, and guided its sessions. To some extent this was intended to be a check on the assembly. The council was a very powerful body in most states and though in many cases its membership was monopolized by the landed aristocracy yet at least at Athens it had become genuinely representative by c. 500 BC.

Athens has a special significance in any discussion on Greek democracy due to the scope of its accomplishment. Moreover, our knowledge about the political structure of Athens is more extensive than that of other states. It may be stated at the outset that in terms of the development of its democratic structure Athens was an exception rather than the rule in ancient Greece. We have already stated that Solon made changes in the political system which gave ordinary Athenians the right to participate in the government. His reforms (594 BC) represent an important stage in the evolution of Athenian democracy. Solon revived the Athenian assembly which had not met for a long time and had ceased to function. He simultaneously constituted a new Athenian council called the *boule*. This council had four hundred members and it superseded the old oligarchical council. The old Athenian council, called Aeropagus, was an organ of the aristocracy. Membership of the latter body was traditionally monopolized by a hereditary elite known as the ‘Eupatridae’. The Aeropagus was not abolished, but its functions were curtailed till eventually it ceased to play an important role. The *boule* now became the main centre of political power. Membership of the *boule* was based on property qualifications and not on hereditary right, which in itself was an innovation.

Solon divided the Athenian citizens into four classes. The property or wealth possessed by a citizen determined the class in which he was placed. Right at the top were the *pentacosiomedimni*, who possessed land which yielded at least 500 *medimnoi* (a unit for measuring the quantity of grain) of wheat, or its equivalent value in wine or oil. Next were the citizens whose land yielded at least 300 *medimnoi* (hippeis). The third category was that of owners of land yielding at least 200 *medimnoi*. Those belonging to this class were called the *zeugitai*. The *zeugitai* were small and middle peasants who also constituted the main strength of the Athenian hoplite infantry and could not therefore be easily ignored. Right at the bottom were the thetes who had property yielding less than 200 *medimnoi*. The thetes were the poor peasantry. We can see that political participation was intimately tied up with landownership and the amount of land owned by a citizen determined his place within the political structure.

Membership of the *boule* was open only to the first three classes. The impoverished sections, i.e. the *thetes* were excluded from the council. In other words the council was essentially a body of the rich and middle peasantry. Qualifications for public offices corresponded to the four-fold class division. The first two classes held the principal political and military offices. The *zeugitai* held minor offices. The *thetes* only had the right to participate in the meetings of the assembly.

After the overthrow of Hippias in 510 BC the political structure was further reformed. The crucial democratic reforms at the beginning of the classical period are attributed to Cleisthenes, who for some years was the most important political figure at Athens following the end of tyranny. A brief outline of some of the key political events in Greece during the Classical Period might be useful for a better understanding of the evolution of the political structure of Athens in this era.

5.4.3 Conflict with Persia: Formation of Delian League

Greek history in the latter half of the sixth century BC has to be viewed against the backdrop of the westward expansion of the Persian empire. We have already discussed this in detail in Unit 4. Persian expansion into western Anatolia, the Aegean and mainland Greece coincided with the phase of tyranny and the beginning of the Classical period at Athens. Between c. 500 and 480 BC the states of the Greek peninsula were locked in a fierce contest with the Achaemenids. Sparta was at this time the foremost military power on land. Athens was the main naval power, though it also had a fairly strong army. The Athenians had built a strong navy which played a leading role in the conflict with Persia. Themistocles was the architect of Athenian naval strength. The Greeks pooled together their resources under the leadership of Athens and Sparta in order to resist the Persian onslaught (for details of Persian campaigns in Greece refer to Unit 4).

Whereas the decisive battles of Salamis (480 BC) and Plataea (479 BC) had halted the Persian advance into the Aegean Sea, the threat of further Persian campaigns still remained. The Greek states were aware of the need to pool together resources on a long-term basis to thwart further invasions. No state had the capacity to fight the Persians entirely on its own. On the Peloponnese there was a strong military alliance under the leadership of Sparta. With this arrangement the Peloponnesians were better placed to defend themselves. The problem was much more serious for the Aegean islands and the coastal states since they had no such mechanism. It was as a solution to this problem that Athens, after Salamis and Plataea, took the initiative to form a confederation of states under its own leadership (487 BC). This confederacy has come to be known as the Delian League. The Delian League derived its name from the island of Delos where the common treasury of the confederacy was located. The primary objective of forming this confederacy was to maintain a strong navy in the Aegean Sea. The members of the Delian League made regular contributions for this purpose.

Once the Persian threat receded, the Athenians transformed the character of the League. They used their dominant position within the League to utilize its resources for promoting its own interests. From a voluntary confederation the Delian League gradually became an empire ruled by the Athenians. The contributions to the League now became enforced tribute payable to Athens. The wealth that the empire, and control over the Aegean Sea, brought to Athens was crucial for sustaining its democratic institutions in the Classical Period and keeping discontent in check.

Having established its hegemony over the Aegean, Athens tried to expand its empire by including the Peloponnese in it. This brought it into conflict with Sparta. A prolonged military contest between the two states ensued. This is known as the Peloponnesian War which lasted from 431 to 404 BC. By 404 BC Athens had been defeated by Sparta and its navy was destroyed. For several decades after that Sparta remained the major Greek power, though it was subsequently challenged by Thebes. The conflicts among the Greek states after the Peloponnesian War gave the Persian an opportunity to interfere in their affairs, and thus to become politically dominant in Greece.

5.4.4 Democratic Political Structure: Emergence of Deme

The hundred years between the overthrow of Hippias and the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian war witnessed the growth of a highly evolved democratic political structure at Athens. This structure owed a lot to the initiatives of Cleisthenes (c. 507 BC). Athenian citizens had been traditionally divided into four Ionian tribes. These traced their descent from the tribes or clans which had originally settled in Attica. Following the political reforms of Solon, each tribe sent one hundred members to the *boule*. Cleisthenes did away with the kinship principle for grouping the citizens, and replaced it with ten residential tribes or *phylai*. These new *phylai* were based on a radically new concept. The *phyle* to which a citizen belonged was determined by the place where he resided and not by his kinship ties.

The primary unit of the democratic structure established by Cleisthenes was the 'deme'. Every citizen was first and foremost a member of a particular deme. The deme was the smallest geographical unit into which the *polis* of Athens was divided for political purposes. There were 139 demes in all. The demes were responsible for maintaining registers of citizens. They had their own local elected governments, including an assembly and officials. The local governments were headed by the *demarchos*. Cleisthenes reformed the *boule* as well. The strength of the council was raised from four hundred to five hundred members. Fifty members were selected from each of the ten *phylai*. Membership of the boule was thrown open to all citizens, including *thetes*. Any citizen over the age of thirty was eligible for membership of the boule. The main executive and military officials of the *polis* were the *archons*. Ever since monarchy had come to an end in Athens the *archons* had been the chief executive and military officers. Throughout the Archaic Period the aristocracy had monopolized these posts. During the Classical Period the archonship was gradually made an elective post and it became possible for ordinary citizens to hold these positions. Despite its limitations, Athenian democracy was an outstanding achievement.

5.4.5 Slave Labour

A distinctive feature of ancient Greek civilization was the widespread use of slave labour in various sectors of the economy. There is evidence of the presence of large numbers of slaves in other ancient civilizations, such as those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and the Hittites. The Mesopotamian and Hittite law codes indicate that institutionalized slavery existed in these civilizations. However the scale of slavery was qualitatively different in ancient Greece. Here for the first time in history slave labour was used extensively for production. The initial pool of slaves was formed of prisoners of war. This source was supplemented from within the community by those who were enslaved due to their inability to pay loans (debt bondage). Nevertheless wars brought captive slaves in much larger numbers. The earliest slaves in Greece, as in other societies, were women. Women slaves formed a significant portion of the workforce in Mycenaean palaces. For example, the palace at Pylos had at least 550 women engaged in textile production. In the Linear B tablets the term used for slaves is *doeri*. The Homeric epics also contain numerous references to women being enslaved during wars.

By the Archaic and Classical Periods slaves were to be found in every sector of production, especially in mining, handicrafts and agriculture. Some historians are of the view that the role of slavery in Greek agriculture has been exaggerated and that the agrarian economy depended mainly on the peasantry and free labour.

At the end of the Dark Age Sparta was already using slave labour on a scale that was unprecedented. Sparta had annexed the territory of Messenia located in the southern Peloponnese and had converted the entire population of this area into slaves. The Spartans introduced a peculiar form of slavery called 'helotry'. Helots were slaves who were owned collectively by the entire Spartan community. Agricultural land in Messenia was divided into holdings called *kleroi* and allotted to Spartan citizens. These holdings, alongwith the land already possessed by the Spartans, were cultivated with the labour of helots. Since there was considerable social differentiation in Sparta, the *kleroi* were not distributed equitably. The aristocracy got a much bigger share.

The distribution of helots was regulated by the state. The state assigned a certain number of slaves to each family depending upon its requirements for labour. The difference between helotry and other types of slavery was that helots were not owned individually. Moreover, they were allowed to maintain family ties. The children born to the helots had the same status as their parents.

This meant that Sparta was able to meet its requirements of slave labour from among the Messenians for several generations. It should not be assumed that helotry was a more humane form of slavery as some scholars have suggested. Helotry was a more primitive form of slavery which in turn reflected the relative backwardness of Spartan economy. Private property was not fully developed in Sparta and there were many tribal survivals in its social organization. Helotry was prevalent in other Greek states as well, as for instance in Thessaly, Crete and Argos. In other parts of Greece privately owned slaves increasingly became a typical feature of Greek society and economy. Several terms were used to describe such slaves, the most common being *doulos*.

In Athens slaves were mostly privately owned. These slaves were regarded as property and bought and sold in the market as commodities. The prosperity of Athens during the Classical Period rested on the expansion of slave labour. Historians have offered figures for Athenian slaves during the fifth century BC ranging from 60,000 to 110,000. It has been estimated that of these, nearly 20,000 to 30,000 worked in the Athenian silver mines. Besides agriculture and mining, slaves dominated handicraft production and were engaged in various kinds of domestic and menial work. It is necessary to emphasize that while there was slave labour in every sector of the economy, free labour was also to be found in all types of production (see also the discussion on Roman slavery in Unit 6).

5.4.6 Development of Philosophical Thought

The ancient Greece may be credited with a very rich intellectual contribution. Due to constraints of space it would not be possible for us to go into detailed analysis of the Greek philosophical tradition. We intend to familiarize you with some basic factual information on the philosophical thought that developed in Greece. Their intellectual tradition touched many aspects of human society and knowledge. History, Philosophy, Mathematics and Medicine were some of the main areas influenced by the ideas of the Greek thinkers. The development of democratic traditions in Greece helped in creating an environment conducive to intellectual discourse and growth.

The Ionian School of thought (c. 600 BC) was one of the earliest philosophic traditions. Thales, Anaximandes and Anazemenes were the main proponents of this school. They were mainly concerned with the basic elements of nature (air, water earth) and their driving force. Pythagoras, an outstanding thinker believed in the transmigration of the soul and laid emphasis on achieving harmony for the soul. He was involved with the study of nature, musical scale and mathematics. However, he is most famous for his geometrical theorem which states that, in a right angled triangle, the square of the length of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Hippocrates was one of the outstanding thinkers of the classical period in the area of medicine. He gave medicine a scientific foundation replacing magical cures. He believed in treating diseases by diagnosing on the basis of examining the symptoms scientifically.

Herodotus (c.484 — 425) is called ‘the father of history’ for giving it a distinct identity as a branch of knowledge. History which was treated as a mix of facts, fiction, myths, legends, fables and anecdotes was given a new meaning based on authentic facts and their verification. He wrote detailed accounts of Persian wars. He widely travelled and gathered information about various countries. He always verified and evaluated his information before writing his accounts.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are considered as the most towering thinkers of the classical Greek Philosophy. Socrates (469 - 399 BC) is credited with a shift from thinking about nature to thinking about the nature of human existence. The refinement of various categories of philosophy was his major contribution. His student Plato (427 – 347 B.C.) established an academy at Athens and taught philosophy. He is regarded as an ‘idealist’. He argued that things have no independent existence outside our minds and believed that experience is unreal, only ideas are real. He influenced later Arab and Western thought in a big way. Plato’s disciple Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C) held ideas which were different from those of his teacher. He disagreed with Plato’s view that experience

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

was unnecessary to understand reality. He was a keen student of Science and studied plants and animals. Both Plato and Aristotle were opposed to the idea of involving masses in all decision making processes. They held the view that people have a limited role to play in the government. This was, to some extent, a reflection of the thinking of the elite in Athens who believed in curtailing democratic rights.

5.4.7 The End of the Classical Period

The Classical Period came to an end in 338 BC when the Macedonians subjugated the *poleis* of the Greek peninsula and the Aegean Sea. Macedonia, just as other regions located north of mainland Greece, had been a relatively backward area. Using improved military techniques and the resources of the Macedonian plains, King Philip II (382-336 BC) created an empire which eventually included the Greek states of the peninsula and the Aegean. In 338 BC Philip defeated the Greek city-states at Chaeronea and placed them under Macedonian rule. With the Macedonian conquest the era of the *polis* came to an end. As a political entity the *polis* ceased to exist after 338 BC. Philip II was succeeded in 336 BC by his son Alexander the Great who founded a vast empire.

Alexander launched a massive expansionist programme following his accession. His primary aim was to destroy Persian power in West Asia so as to consolidate Macedonian rule over the entire region. By 330 BC Alexander had conquered the Persian empire after defeating the last of the Achaemenid emperors (Darius III). His subsequent campaigns brought him to the banks of the Indus. Alexander died at Babylon in 323 BC. The eastward expansion of the Macedonian empire under Alexander had made Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan and some parts of Central Asia and northwest India, Macedonian-ruled territories. Following the death of Alexander some of the outlying regions of the empire were lost but the greater part of Alexander's territories remained under Macedonian control.

Alexander had left no heir to his vast empire and had made no arrangements for appointing a successor. A bitter power struggle among his leading officials and military commanders (referred to as the 'Diadochi' or successors) broke out after his death. This struggle lasted almost till 275 BC. The empire was eventually partitioned among three of the Diadochi — Seleucus, Ptolemy and Antigonus. The dynasties of these successors ruled over their respective portions of the empire: the Seleucids in Iran, Mesopotamia and Syria; the Ptolemies in Egypt; and the Antigonids in Macedonia.

The period from the death of Alexander and the founding of the Seleucid, Ptolemid and Antigonid empires down to the time when Rome became the supreme power in the eastern Mediterranean (c. 300 to 30 BC) is referred to as the Hellenistic age. The successor states which came into existence as a result of the division of Alexander's empire are called Hellenistic kingdoms. The Hellenistic kingdoms were governed by a Macedonian/Greek ruling elite and Greek became the official language of Iran, West Asia, Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. Greek also became the chief language of intellectual discourse in this area. The Hellenistic kingdoms created conditions for disseminating the accomplishments of classical Greek civilization over a large part of West Asia and in Egypt. Since the Asian and north African territories of the Hellenistic kingdoms were centres of grand ancient civilizations, the Greek ruling classes of these empires adopted several customs of their subjects. This gave rise to a dynamic cultural tradition which may be conveniently labelled as Hellenistic civilization.

5.5 SUMMARY

The Greece as we mentioned earlier is a unique case in the age of empires as it was a centre of great civilization but did not develop into an empire. In this unit, we tried to give an overview of around 2000 years of ancient Greece. It is not possible to give details of all aspects of such a great civilization in one Unit. We have, therefore, confined our discussion to some of the salient features of Greek Civilization. In the early phase which is roughly upto c.800 BC we studied the development of Minoan, Mycenaean and Dark Ages.

The Archaic and classical periods witnessed some significant social and political developments. Conflict of peasantry and landed aristocracy and subsequent transition to Greek democracy were important changes. The period between 500 BC and 480 BC witnessed regular conflict with Persian Empire. As a result attempts were made in Greek states to pool together their resources to face the external aggressions. Confederacy so formed came to be known as Delian League. During classical period democratic political structures got strengthened with the formation of Deme. Extensive use of slave labour in various sectors of production was one of the unique features of Greek history during the classical period. We also provided a brief account of the development of philosophical thought in particular contributions of Herodotus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The end of the classical period of Greek history has been discussed in the last section of the Unit.

5.6 EXERCISES

1) Analyze briefly the early Greek Civilizations.

2) How did transition to democracy happen in ancient Greece?

3) Write short notes on slave labour and the Delian league.

4) Discuss the ideas of ancient Greek philosophers.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 6 THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Structure

6.1 Introduction

6.2 The Roman Expansion

- 6.2.1 The First Phase
- 6.2.2 The Second Phase

6.3 Political Structure and Society

- 6.3.1 Social Orders and the Senate
- 6.3.2 Officials of the Republic
- 6.3.3 Struggle Between Patricians and Plebeians
- 6.3.4 The Assembly
- 6.3.5 Conflict of the Orders
- 6.3.6 Social Differentiation in Plebeians

6.4 Conflicts and Expansion

- 6.4.1 Professional Army and War Lords
- 6.4.2 Wars for Expansion
- 6.4.3 Struggle of War Lords with the Senate

6.5 Slavery

6.6 Summary

6.7 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read in Unit 5 that Alexander the Great created a vast, but shortlived empire, which was partitioned soon after his death. Following the end of the Persian Empire, and with the disruption of the unity of Alexander's Macedonian empire, a new political entity rose to prominence in the Mediterranean region. This was the Roman Empire which became the largest and most enduring empire in antiquity. The nucleus of the empire lay in Italy and subsequently it encompassed the entire Mediterranean world. Roman expansion into the Mediterranean began soon after the break-up of the Macedonian empire. By this time the city of Rome in Italy had succeeded in bringing almost the entire Italian peninsula under its control.

Rome was among the many settlements of Latin-speaking people in Italy. Latin forms part of the broad Indo-European group of languages. In the period after c. 2000 BC several Indo-European tribes were settled in Italy and these intermingled with indigenous groups such as the Etruscans. Both the Latins and the Etruscans played an important role in the early phase of the history of Rome. Rome, located on the banks of the Tiber river in the central part of Italy not far from the western coast of the peninsula, was traditionally supposed to have been founded in 753 BC. According to the traditional history of the city, settlements on seven hills along the Tiber river were enclosed by a wall in 753 BC. This became the city of Rome. However, the historicity of this date has not been established. The archaeological evidence suggests that the city was first fortified at a much later date, c. 550 BC. It is around this time that the population of the settlements on the seven hills began to expand. The low-lying area around the hills was initially covered with swamps and these had to be drained before the foothills could be inhabited. The rural settlements enclosed by the wall soon grew into a major urban centre.

Our knowledge of the early history of Rome is rather sketchy. According to tradition Rome had become a republic by 510 BC. Monarchy was abolished. After this date the city was ruled by an oligarchy consisting of the wealthy Latin aristocracy of Rome. This makes the Roman Empire very different from the other empires which we have discussed in the previous units. The Roman empire was unique in that for nearly five centuries it had a republican form of government and was not ruled by a monarchy. The government was headed by two magistrates, called Consuls, who were elected annually. The main instrument of aristocratic power was the oligarchical council or Senate. The Senate was the supreme body of the Roman Republic. There were also assemblies of citizens, though at the beginning of the Republic they had almost no share in governance. The last hundred years of the republic witnessed the rise of professional army. The segments of this army were controlled by war commanders and were loyal to them rather than the State. These commanders or war lords had regular conflicts with each other and also as a group with Roman State. Large scale use of slave labour was also one of the important features of Roman republic

6.2 THE ROMAN EXPANSION

The Roman Republic lasted around 500 years from c. 510 to 27 BC. It was during this period that the city state grew into a huge and powerful empire. The growth came through series of wars and conflicts. The expansion was achieved over a long period of time in two distinct phases.

6.2.1 The First Phase

In the first phase of its expansion Rome was engaged in bringing the entire Italian peninsula under its control. This phase lasted for more than two centuries, from c. 500 to 280 BC. Rome began by establishing its supremacy over central Italy. It forged alliances with the Latin-speaking people of the area. These alliances provided the Romans with resources for successful campaigns against non-Latin states. The crucial event in the struggle against non-Latin states of central Italy was the conquest of Veii in 396 BC after almost ten years of struggle. Veii was an Etruscan city situated close to Rome and was for a long time its main rival. The victory over Veii placed the land and wealth of Veii at the disposal of Rome. Rome could now pursue its expansionist programme more aggressively. A little later the Celts invaded Rome and destroyed it. They withdraw with lots of booty. This was a serious setback. The Romans recovered soon and established their supremacy in warfare. They succeeded in bringing large parts of central Italy under them.

Having brought most of central Italy under its rule by c. 295 BC, Rome turned its attention to southern Italy. In the previous unit (Unit 5) we referred to the presence of Greek settlements in this part of Italy. The Greek states of southern Italy strongly resisted Roman expansion. Eventually after some fiercely fought battles these states were subjugated by the Romans. This completed the first major phase of Roman expansion. At the end of this phase the entire peninsula was directly or indirectly subject to Rome.

6.2.2 The Second Phase

The Romans were now in a position to embark upon a second phase of expansion the objective of which was to extend Roman influence to the Mediterranean. This immediately resulted in a conflict with the Carthaginians who at this time dominated the western Mediterranean. Carthage, strategically located on the North African coastline (in modern Tunisia), was originally a Phoenician trading settlement which had been founded sometime in the ninth century BC. This had grown into a vast empire which included large parts of the western Mediterranean (including Sicily, Spain etc.). When Rome tried to annex Sicily after having consolidated its position in southern Italy, it got involved in a prolonged military contest with the Carthaginian Empire. It should be borne in mind that Roman expansion into the western Mediterranean could only have taken place at the expense of Carthage. For over a century Rome fought a series of wars against the Carthaginians.

The wars between Rome and Carthage are known as the Punic Wars. There were three Punic Wars (First Punic War, 264-241 BC; Second Punic War, 218-201 BC; and Third Punic War, 149-146 BC). By the end of the Third Punic War the Carthaginian empire had been completely destroyed and the city of Carthage itself was occupied. Carthaginian territories were annexed by Rome. The territories taken over during the course of the Punic Wars were reorganized into Roman provinces — the Roman provinces of Sicily, Spain and Africa (Africa was the name given to the province consisting of Carthage and its adjoining territory situated in north Africa, broadly corresponding to present-day Tunisia).

Simultaneously, the Romans had brought Macedonia and the Greek states under their control. The Antigonids who ruled over Macedonia were defeated (167 BC) and subsequently in 147 BC Macedonia was annexed by Rome. Macedonia became another Roman province and the Greek states were placed under indirect Roman rule, supervised from Macedonia. Soon Roman influence extended to Egypt as well. Egypt was, as you might recall, ruled by the Ptolemid dynasty. It became a Roman protectorate which implied that it could no longer pursue an independent foreign policy. Western Anatolia too had passed under Roman rule and was constituted into the province of Asia (not be confused with the continent of Asia). Thus, by the middle of the second century BC the entire Mediterranean was directly or indirectly under the Romans. The Roman Empire continued to expand for more than two centuries after this, but the main contours of its territorial orbit were already well-defined. The Mideterranean Sea remained the nucleus of the empire. Before we look at the subsequent expansion of Rome, it is necessary to examine the Roman political structure and the society on which it was based.

6.3 POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIETY

The early Romans had kingship along with the senate and assembly. The senate wielded many powers and there were regular conflicts with the kings. In 510 BC monarchy came to an end at Rome and a republican state was established which lasted till 27 BC. At the beginning of the Republic political power was monopolized by the Roman aristocracy. Now, almost complete power was vested in the Senate an oligarchical council. Membership of the Senate was open only to the aristocracy.

REGNUM BOSPORI
Hierosolyma
JUDAEA
CYPRUS
Alexandria
Byzantium
Cyrene
Sirmium
GERMANIA
Carthage
Rome
Misenum
CORSICA
SARDINIA
Massilia
Caesarea

6.3.1 Social Orders and the Senate

Here one would like to draw attention to a distinctive feature of Roman social organization. Roman society was marked by a permanent division of the inhabitants (citizens) into two *orders*: the patrician order and the plebeian order. The patricians constituted a small close-knit hereditary elite while the plebeians were the common people. However both the orders were included in the category of citizens. The division of the Romans into two orders has a few similarities with the Indian caste system. This division had a permanency which resembles the permanency of being born into a particular caste. A citizen was born a patrician or a plebeian. A plebeian could not become a patrician just by acquiring wealth or political power. For a long time intermarriage between the two orders was prohibited by law. The patricians were the economically, politically and socially dominant group in Roman society. Being born a patrician meant automatic access to wealth, political power and a high social and ritual status. Patricians had extensive control over Roman religion. Many of the important priesthoods remained closed to the plebeians almost till the end of the Republic.

Right since the beginning of the Republic the Senate, which was the main organ of the state, was monopolized by the patricians. Only patrician males could be members of the Senate. The plebeian citizens (and all women) were excluded from it. In the early Republic the Senate had 300 members. In the later Republic the number went up to 600. Membership of the Senate was by cooption, i.e. the original members themselves chose additional or new members. The initial members must have been the heads of powerful aristocratic families who had overthrown the monarchy. Membership of the Senate was for life. The Senate had wide-ranging powers, most of which were not formally defined. The overwhelming majority of senators were big landowners. In other words, the Roman Republic was ruled by a landed patrician aristocratic oligarchy.

6.3.2 Officials of the Republic

As mentioned earlier, the highest officials of the Republic were two annually elected magistrates known as Consuls. They presided over the Senate and performed executive, judicial and military functions. It should be noted that the Consuls were elected by an assembly of all the citizens (which included the plebeians) and not by the Senate. Consuls could seek re-election without any restrictions. Till 367 BC only patricians could become Consuls. In 367 BC, following a prolonged struggle, one of the consulships was thrown open to the plebeians. This provision remained a mere formality for a long time because the patricians controlled the electoral process and could manipulate the choice of candidates. It was only in the late Republic that plebeians actually started getting elected to the consulship. This was the only way in which a plebeian could enter the Senate since a Consul was automatically made a senator. Towards the end of the Republic some privileged plebeians were thus able to become members of the Senate.

The Roman Republic had several other elected magistrates who looked after various aspects of governance. There were two very powerful magistrates called Censors. They were elected once in every five years and held office for eighteen months at a time. During their tenure they had to carry out a census of Roman citizens. This was very different from the modern concept of a census.

It was confined only to citizens. The Censors recorded the names of citizens and the amount of property possessed by each citizen. The census determined the eligibility of a citizen, depending upon the value of his property, to hold various elective offices of the Roman state. The Censors also controlled public morality and had the right to take action against any citizen who violated norms of public morality. The Censors had a few additional functions such as leasing out public lands and granting state contracts. All these functions combined to make the censorship a very powerful office. In the early Republic only patricians (mainly former Consuls) could be elected as Censors. Later, just as in the case of the consulship, plebeians too became eligible for the censorship. Besides the Consuls and the Censors, there were numerous junior magistrates, as for example Aediles and Quaestors. These magistrates were also elected. All magistrates served in an honorary capacity (i.e. they did not receive any remuneration from the state).

6.3.3 Struggle Between Patricians and Plebeians

The history of the early Republic was marked by a constant struggle between the landed aristocracy and the common people. While on the one hand the patricians tried to concentrate all political power in their hands, on the other hand the plebeians began to assert themselves and demanded that they should also have a say in the political process. The system evolved by the patricians after the establishment of the Republic completely denied the plebeians any say in the government. It is not difficult to see why the peasantry could not be easily ignored. The Roman aristocracy had to seek the support of the peasantry for defending the city and subsequently for expansion in Italy. Roman military organization was heavily dependent on the peasants who constituted the main fighting force. The army comprised unpaid soldiers who were primarily recruited from the peasantry. The soldiers had to supply their own fighting equipment. All able-bodied male adults had to render military service. We have seen that this was the pattern of military organization in Greece as well. As Rome began to expand, the need to have the support of the peasant soldiers increased. Initially the peasantry derived some minor benefits from this expansion, but it was the patrician aristocracy that was the main beneficiary of the empire. The growth of the empire made the aristocracy fabulously wealthy and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. In the early phase of Roman expansion the peasantry was able to extract major political concessions. Through these concessions a small section of the plebeians (the peasants were invariably plebeians) got some share in political power.

6.3.4 The Assembly

Given the role which the plebeians played in the Roman military structure, they were able to successfully organize themselves to struggle for their demands. The political system of the city of Rome included a tribal assembly which had been in existence since the time of monarchy. The members of this assembly were all male adults of the tribes which originally inhabited Rome.

Comitia Curiata

The Roman assembly, i.e. the assembly of all citizens, was called *comitia curiata*. When the patricians assumed power and set up an oligarchical state the *comitia curiata* more or less ceased to function. It continued to exist formally but had no real power.

The *comitia curiata* was organized on the basis of kinship-based social units called *curiae* (singular *curia*) into which the original inhabitants of Rome were divided. The curiae were extended clans which included both patricians and plebeians. According to the information that we have, during the early Republic the total number of *curiae* was thirty. These were grouped into three tribes. Each tribe contained ten curiae. The patricians were able to control the proceedings of the *comitia curiata* by choosing appropriate presiding officers. Voting in the assembly was not based on the principle of 'one member, one vote'. Each *curia* voted collectively so that only the opinion of the *curia* as a whole was expressed. Using their kinship ties patricians were able to influence the opinions of the respective *curiae*. They would speak on behalf of the entire curia. Most of the citizens were thus reduced to the status of observers. The participation of the bulk of the members gradually became so irrelevant that eventually one official representative from each *curia* was sent to attend its sessions and vote on matters placed before it.

In view of the inegalitarian nature of the *comitia curiata* it could hardly be expected that this assembly would reflect the interests of the plebeians. As a result of growing pressure from the plebeians the citizens were regrouped to form a new assembly.

Comitia Centuriata

This assembly was called *comitia centuriata*. The *comitia centuriata*, like the *comitia curiata* was an assembly of all Roman citizens (patricians and plebeians). The difference between the two organs lay in the manner in which the citizens were grouped. In the *comitia centuriata* the citizens were grouped into 'centuries'. A century was the smallest unit of the Roman army and was technically supposed to consist, as the term indicates, of one hundred men though in practice the number might have varied. In the initial stages the *comitia centuriata* resembled a military formation. There were 193 centuries in all. The 193 centuries were grouped into five classes. These classes were constituted on the basis of property qualifications. The 193 centuries were not distributed equally among the five classes. The largest numbers of centuries were placed in the first three classes, which were the classes of the aristocracy and the big landowners. In the *comitia centuriata* the century was a notional unit. Each century did not have the same number of citizens. The centuries of the first two classes had very few citizens in them. At the other end were the propertyless citizens. These citizens were labelled as *proletarii*. The *proletarii* were placed in the lowest class. This class, though numerically very large, was assigned just one century. With this kind of classification the participation of the poorer citizens in the assembly had no meaning at all. Since voting in the *comitia centuriata* was by centuries and not on the principle of 'one man, one vote' (each century counted as one vote), the aristocracy and big landowners had more votes even though they were numerically in a minority. The procedure and functioning of the assembly was also strictly regulated by the patricians.

The *comitia centuriata* was probably formed (or became important) around 450 BC. For most of the republican period this was the main assembly of citizens. Consuls and Censors were elected by the *comitia centuriata*, and all legislation had to be approved by it. War and peace were the prerogative of this assembly. The *comitia curiata* now only looked after a few matters of a social and religious nature.

Concilium Plebis

Whereas the *comitia curiata* and the *comitia centuriata* were assemblies of all Roman citizens, there was also an assembly consisting only of plebeians. This plebeian assembly was known as the *concilium plebis*. The *concilium plebis* discussed issues which concerned the plebeians. Soon this plebeian assembly got institutionalized and evolved its own structure. It had regular procedures and elected its own officials. In 494 BC the plebeians forced the Roman state to formally accept two officers elected by the *concilium plebis*, known as Tribunes, as spokesmen of the plebeians. The responsibilities of the Tribunes gradually multiplied leading to an increase in the number of officials with this title. By 448 BC there were ten Tribunes. The Tribunes were elected annually by the *concilium plebis.* For the wealthier plebeians this became a much sought after office. Being elected Tribune gave to a plebeian some access to political power, something that was otherwise not possible at the beginning of the Republic.

6.3.5 Conflict of the Orders

In the traditional periodization of the history of ancient Rome, the two centuries or so from 510 to 287 BC are referred to as the period of 'conflict of the orders' (patricians and plebeians). The recognition accorded to the Tribunes in 494 BC was one important phase in this conflict. After this development there were four other major landmarks in the struggle of the plebeians.

i) One of the foremost demands of the plebeians was that there should be a written code of law so that there was no arbitrary exercise of judicial authority. In the absence of written laws the patricians had consistently abused their judicial powers. The plebeians threatened the Senate that they would not perform military service if it not initiate steps to create a proper legal framework for the Roman state. The Senate set up a ten-member commission ('decemvirs') presided over by Appius Claudius. The commission prepared a set of laws for the Romans. This set of laws is known as the Code of the Twelve Tables. It was introduced in c. 450 BC, around the same time as the establishment of the *comitia centuriata*. The Twelve Tables were the basis of Roman law. Unfortunately, the full text of the Twelve Tables has not survived. This code reduced the scope for arbitrary exercise of judicial authority by the patricians.

ii) The second landmark was the provision whereby one of the consulships was opened to the plebeians in 367 BC. The actual election of a plebeian to the post of Consul came much later. Since the Consuls were elected by the *comitia centuriata* (in which the patricians held the majority of votes) and the names of candidates had to be proposed by senators, it was not easy for a plebeian to be elected to the highest magistracy of the Roman state. It was only in the last hundred years of the Republic that plebeians began to regularly hold consulships. These plebeian Consuls became members of the Senate via the consulship. By utilizing this route a handful of senatorial plebeian families rose to prominence in the late Republic (e.g. the Gracchus brothers and Mark Antony).

iii) Another crucial reform was introduced in 326 BC. Roman law had a very harsh provision which related to the strict enforcement of formal contracts or *nexum*. If a Roman entered into a formal agreement or *nexum* while contracting a loan in which the debtor's person was pledged as security, failure to honour the agreement resulted in debt bondage. Debts incurred due to frequent participation in wars, as well as to meet diverse economic needs, had made indebtedness a chronic peasant problem. When the peasants and other poor people were unable to repay their loans they were enslaved. *Nexum* thus became a device for the big landowners to convert free peasants into unfree labour. The abolition of *nexum* was thus a crucial issue for the plebeians. In 326 BC a law was enacted which prohibited the enslavement of Roman citizens for non-repayment of debts.

iv) The fourth, and politically the most significant, landmark in the conflict of the orders during the early Republic was a step taken in 287 BC which gave the plebeian Tribunes full-fledged magisterial powers. There seems to have been a serious crisis at this stage which culminated in another threat by the plebeians to withdraw from military service. The political crisis at home coincided with the plan to subjugate the Greek states of southern Italy. By a law of 287 BC the decisions of the *concilium* plebis were made binding on the Roman state. Henceforth the Tribunes were authorized to enforce the decisions of the *concilium plebis* with the full sanction of the Roman state, with appropriate punishments for violation. This legislation greatly increased the clout of the *concilium plebis*. Its decisions had full legal authority. Correspondingly, the tribuneship became a powerful magistracy. The events of 287 BC are supposed to have brought to an end the conflict of the orders.

It needs to be emphasized that the Senate — the membership of which remained predominantly patrician — never gave up its preeminent position within the Roman state. It made a few concessions by allowing the assemblies of Roman citizens and the *concilium plebis* to have some say in the affairs of the Roman state. But the Senate retained its overall control over the decision-making process. This gave rise to new contradictions which eventually brought about the end of the Republic.

6.3.6 Social Differentiation in Plebeians

At the beginning of the Republic most of the plebeians had been peasants. By the late Republic the plebeian order had become socially differentiated. At one end was a tiny elite among the plebeians. This elite had used political concessions to gain access to power and wealth. A handful of plebeian senatorial families came into existence which enjoyed almost the same status as the patrician aristocracy. This small section of the plebeians had fully become a part of the ruling oligarchy of Rome by the late Republic. The plebeian elite had little in common with the rest of the plebeians and was no longer interested in struggling for the rights of the peasantry.

At the other end were the propertyless citizens. In the early Republic most of the plebeians had owned some land, but by the third century BC many of them had lost their holdings. In the *comitia centuriata* the propertyless citizens were placed in the single century allotted to the *proletarii*. In between the plebeian elite and the landless class stood the peasantry. The Roman small peasants were called *assidui*. The *assidui* constituted the bulk of the Roman infantry. The abolition of debt bondage in 326 BC had placed restrictions on the enslavement of peasants for non-repayment of loans. However, the peasants continued to lose their landholdings. This situation was further aggravated due to their participation in wars of expansion that went on for many centuries. After 146

BC the struggle of the peasants centred around the question of land reforms. The question of land reform had assumed urgency not only due to the desperate condition of the *assidui* but also because without land peasants were unable to mobilize resources to render military service. Land reforms were unacceptable to the aristocracy. Due to their violent opposition, it was just not possible to carry out any redistribution of holdings.

6.4 CONFLICTS AND EXPANSION

The republic experienced some unique changes during last hundred years of its existence. The most important of these was the creation of a professional army under individual commanders. These armies were fiercely loyal to their commanders. These commanders led campaigns for enhancing their powers and resources. The commanders with increase in their powers entered into conflicts with each other as well as the senate to control the republic. In this section we have a brief discussion on these important developments.

6.4.1 Professional Army and War Lords

In the Roman republic small land holding peasants were the main strength of the army. These soldiers had to arrange their own weapons and battle gear. The desperate condition of peasants, as discussed in the previous section had implications for the army also.

The opposition to land redistribution and the dwindling size of the *assidui* class necessitated an immediate solution to the problem of recruiting soldiers. Landless citizens could not be made to render military service out of their own resources. Earlier, a partial solution had been found by raising auxiliary contingents from subjugated territories. A portion of the cavalry was also maintained at state expense. In 100 BC Marius who held the post of Consul for several terms and was a leading political and military figure, introduced changes in the military organization of Rome by inducting paid troops. Roman soldiers now began to receive a salary from the state. The creation of a professional standing army which was commanded by military leaders drawn from the aristocracy gave a new dimension to the political conflicts in Rome. Previously the assidui soldiers would return home after a campaign and go back to their fields. Paid soldiers were permanently engaged in campaigns and were stationed for long periods outside Italy in distant parts of the empire. The army units developed an identity and cohesiveness which was not present earlier. The units were fiercely loyal to their commanders to whose planning and strategy they attributed their achievements. This was particularly the case with the more successful commanders. Victory in war gave a chance to the soldiers to loot and plunder.

With large well-trained armies under them the military leaders of the aristocracy could violently assert themselves for controlling the Roman state. There were several such commanders in the period between 100 BC and 27 BC: Marius himself, Sulla, Crassus, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Augustus.

The army was increasingly deployed to suppress discontent and to promote the interests of the aristocracy. It was also used in the personal factional conflicts of the aristocracy. The army itself became a factor in the politics of Rome.

The disappearance of the *assidui* as a class transformed the character of the Republic. Roman citizens in central Italy were now mainly propertyless plebeians. Having no means of subsistence at their disposal they congregated in the city of Rome where cheap rations were available. Considering that most of the proletarii could not afford even subsidized grain the Roman state began to distribute free grain to the most destitute citizens. It has been estimated by c. 50 BC about 320,000 citizens were receiving free grain. These impoverished proletarii could be easily manipulated by the aristocracy in their political conflicts.

6.4.2 Wars for Expansion

The social and political developments at Rome in the late Republic coincided with major military campaigns in West Asia. In continuation of the objective to bring the Hellenistic kingdoms in this region under its control, Rome had been constantly intervening in the affairs of the western Mediterranean region and West Asia. Macedonia had been annexed, the Greek states had been forced to accept Roman supremacy, western Anatolia had been organized as the province of Asia, the Seleucids (who now ruled only over Syria) had been defeated in war, and Egypt was made a protectorate. The Romans had to maintain a very large army in the east in order to consolidate their position and to crush resistance. The command of this vast army became a matter of dispute among the political and military leaders of Rome. Marius, had been given charge of the campaigns in the east for some time. He was opposed by Sulla who at that time headed the most conservative group within the patrician aristocracy. Sulla was stationed in the east and he refused to hand over command to Marius. Instead, he marched to Rome with the army and tried to forcibly seize power. As a result a Civil War broke out between the supporters of Sulla and Marius.

In this Civil War, which lasted from 88 to 82 BC, Sulla soon got the upper hand. His task was made easier by the death of Marius in 86 BC. Following this he carried out military campaigns in Anatolia and Greece and was successful in putting down the resistance to Roman occupation in the area. This added to his prestige and increased his hold over the army. He used his power to become absolute ruler of the Roman Empire. Sulla returned to Rome in 82 BC and with the help of the army brutally suppressed his opponents. In 81 BC he got himself appointed Dictator (this was a formal position in the Roman state and carried with it absolute authority; a Dictator could be appointed to deal with an emergency, but could not hold this office for more than six months). Sulla defied the rule according to which six months was the maximum period for which a Roman Dictator could retain this office. He extended his dictatorship indefinitely. Sulla retired in 79 BC due to personal reasons and died the following year.

The dictatorship of Sulla was a turning point in the history of the Republic. From now on powerful military commanders, or ‘warlords’, controlled the Roman empire. The violent conflicts of these warlords speeded up the collapse of the Republic. The military situation was critical at the time of Sulla’s retirement. The east had not been fully pacified and Rome was faced with a major revolt in the west. Some of the supporters of Marius had launched a movement against Sulla’s dictatorship. The province of Spain was the main centre of this revolt. The movement developed into a guerrilla war under the leadership of Sertorius. Between 80 and 72 BC the province was virtually independent. Within Italy

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

itself a major slave uprising broke out in 73 BC and went on till 71 BC. This uprising, which was led by a slave named Spartacus, was the biggest slave revolt in Graeco-Roman antiquity. The Spartacus revolt, as it is called, engulfed a large part of southern Italy and could only be crushed after very heavy fighting.

In this situation Rome had to carry out military mobilization on a massive scale. The military campaigns of this critical period brought four warlords to the forefront of Roman politics: Lucullus, Crassus, Pompey and Julius Caesar. Their struggle for power dominated the closing years of the Republic. All four derived their strength from the armies which they commanded and the prestige that they gained due to their victories. They were also prominent figures in the politics of Rome. Pompey was responsible for the defeat of Sertorius, Crassus suppressed the Spartacus revolt and Lucullus led several successful campaigns in the east. In 70 BC Crassus and Pompey strengthened their political position by getting elected as Consuls for that year. Julius Caesar was sent to Spain to restore order in the province after the victory over Sertorius.

In 67 BC Lucullus was recalled from the east and subsequently retired from public life. This left three warlords — Crassus, Pompey, and Julius Caesar. Pompey was now sent to replace Lucullus. He was given extensive powers which were more wide-ranging than those of any other Roman military commander before him. He was fully authorized to settle the east in whatever manner he considered appropriate. By 63 BC Roman authority over Anatolia was fully established. Following this Pompey managed to annex the Seleucid territories in Syria. Syria became a Roman province with headquarters at Antioch. These developments made Rome a major political power in West Asia.

6.4.3 Struggle of War Lords with the Senate

The Roman Senate attempted to curb the power of Pompey and the two other leading warlords, Julius Caesar and Crassus, but eventually failed to do so. This was mainly because the Senate was unable to exercise complete control over the armies which these three warlords commanded. Nevertheless the tussle between the Senate and the warlords created a serious political crisis. Against the backdrop of this crisis Pompey, Julius Caesar and Crassus joined hands to take over the Roman state. The three warlords formed a coalition in 60 BC. This coalition is referred to as the First Triumvirate (the term 'triumvirate' signified that authority was equally divided among the three). The historical significance of the Triumvirate can only be understood when we realize that the constitutional machinery of the Republic had broken down by this time and there was no effective government at Rome. Pompey, Crassus and Julius Caesar tried out a new experiment by concentrating all power in their hands. The entire authority of the Roman state was vested in the Triumvirate. The other institutions of the Republic were not abolished but they were made ineffective.

The Triumvirate was renewed in 56 BC. However, soon after 56 BC this arrangement began to face problems. Crassus was killed in a battle in northern Mesopotamia (53 BC). Thereafter relations between Pompey and Julius Caesar deteriorated. The struggle for power between them led to a full-fledged civil war. Pompey was defeated in 48 BC and fled to Egypt where he was murdered. Julius Caesar was now the supreme warlord of Rome. In 48 BC he became Dictator with extensive powers. In 47 BC he was made Dictator for ten years. Caesar's attempt to become absolute ruler was challenged by some sections of the aristocracy. He was murdered in 44 BC. The leaders of the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar belonged to the faction of the aristocracy which wanted to prevent Julius Caesar from converting the Republic into a monarchy. It is a matter of debate whether or not this was the ultimate aim of Julius Caesar. Yet there can be no doubt that he was trying to alter the basic structure of the Republic and this was resisted violently.

The supporters of Julius Caesar quickly reorganized themselves under the leadership of Mark Antony, Lepidus and Octavian Caesar. Mark Antony was one of the most prominent allies of Julius Caesar while Lepidus was 'master of the horse' (an important office linked to a Dictator) during the dictatorship. Octavian was a grand-nephew of Julius Caesar and was recognized as his adopted son. Mark Antony, Lepidus and Octavian formed a new triumvirate, known as the Second Triumvirate, in 43 BC. Within a year the Triumvirate had suppressed all opposition. Brutus and Cassius were defeated in battle (42 BC). Soon afterwards, Lepidus was forced to retire from the Triumvirate, leaving Mark Antony and Octavian complete masters of the empire. Subsequent differences between the two led to a power struggle which culminated in an open war. The struggle for power between the two coincided with further Roman campaigns in the east. Mark Antony sought the support of Cleopatra, the Ptolemid ruler of Egypt. The combined forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra were defeated by Octavian at Actium on the western coast of mainland Greece in 31 BC. Mark Antony and Cleopatra were dead by 30 BC and Octavian had a virtual monopoly of political power in Rome. In 27 BC Octavian assumed the title Augustus (exalted), the name by which he was henceforth known. He simultaneously declared himself as *Princeps*, i.e. the first and foremost citizen. 27 BC formally marks the end of the Republic and the beginning of the *Principate*.

Augustus was the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire for four decades till his death in AD 14. He successfully transformed the character of the Republic — a process which had begun as early as 81 BC under Sulla's dictatorship. Augustus was careful not to hurt the sentiments that the people had for Roman republican traditions. These traditions had a history of several centuries and could not be immediately abandoned. Most of the political institutions of the Republic were retained and the designations of most of the public officials remained the same as before. Augustus himself did not assume any royal title. Princeps merely implied first citizen. In fact it might not have been apparent to his contemporaries that a monarchical form of government was coming into existence. It is only when we place the Augustan era in a historical context that we can understand the implications of his actions and see how he replaced the Republic with a monarchy.

It needs to be pointed out that Roman monarchy under the Principate hadsome very unusual features which were in fact products of the long republican past of Rome. Whereas Augustus managed to fundamentally alter the nature of the Republic we must bear in mind that the final transition to a monarchical form of government was actually completed in a period spread over several generations. For a very long time Augustus and his successors maintained the fiction that the Republic had not come to an end. In theory the authority of the emperor (i.e. Princeps) was not derived from any divine right to rule but was based on the consent of the citizens. The ruler was supposed to be the embodiment of the Republic. In practice this meant that a ruler had to have the sanction of the Senate and the army. Unlike most of the other republican institutions which existed only in name, the Senate did retain some authority after 27 BC. Though there were no formal rules about how the emperor was to be chosen (dynastic successions were an exception, rather than the rule), recognition by both the Senate and the army gave the stamp of legitimacy to an emperor and made his rule relatively stable. The three main components of the new political structure were the emperor, the Senate and the army. The success of Augustus lay in ensuring that a proper balance of power was maintained between these three components. The stability that he imparted to the new arrangement allowed the Principate to survive for nearly 250 years.

The Roman Empire continued to expand under the Principate till AD 117 when it reached its greatest territorial extent. The empire included Spain (including present-day Portugal), Gaul (modern France and Belgium), Britain, Italy, and all of central and eastern Europe south of the river Danube. Romania, situated across the Danube, was also a Roman territory. In the east the empire encompassed Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, parts of northern Mesopotamia and Egypt. In northern Africa Roman rule extended to all the territories located between the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean sea. The entire Mediterranean was politically unified for several centuries under the Romans and was vital for sustaining its economy. Control over the Mediterranean facilitated long-distance trade and communications.

6.5 SLAVERY

We have noted that large-scale slavery was an important feature of the Greek social formation. However it was in Rome that slavery reached its most extensive development in the ancient world. The Roman aristocracy had acquired vast landed estates in the western portion of the empire (especially in Spain, Gaul and Italy). The conquest of these territories opened up new possibilities for the expansion of slavery. The agrarian economy of Western Europe was dominated by the huge landed estates known as *latifundia*. The estates of big landowners in classical Greece bear no comparison with the size of the *latifundia*. In Greece large holdings ranged in size from 75 to 100 acres. Estates above 100 acres were unusual. The *latifundia* of the Roman aristocracy were normally several thousand acres in size. The big latifundists possessed holdings amounting to several hundred of thousands of acres.

Agricultural labour on the *latifundia* was carried out by slaves. The possibilities for the expansion of slavery were quite limited in Greece due to the small size of land holdings. Now the *latifundia* could absorb ever-increasing numbers of slaves. War and piracy sustained slave supplies for these estates. It has been estimated that in the Italian peninsula itself the slave population rose from 600,000 to 3 million between 225 and 43 BC. The consolidation of Roman rule in the western provinces under Augustus and his immediate successors led to the extension of agriculture and of slavery in Spain and Gaul. The era of peace and stability ushered in by the Augustan age allowed the Roman ruling class to amass huge fortunes.

Roman law recognized slaves as a form of property. The commonly used term for a slave was *servus*. Slaves were commodities, bought and sold in the market in the same way as cattle. Slave labour was to be found in every sector of the Roman economy. Agriculture, mining, and handicraft production were the sectors in which they were the most numerous. Slaves accounted for as much as ninety per cent of handicraft production. Slaves were also employed as clerks in government offices. The majority of the slaves worked on *latifundia*. Agricultural slaves, as well as slaves engaged in mining, were often bound by chains. The Roman State used force to keep a strict control over the slaves. Special care was taken to disperse them and prevent formation of any solidarity among slaves. They spoke different languages and had no kinship ties. Inspite of the strict control of the state we come across many uprisings and revolts of these slaves. We have evidence for three major slave revolts. The first (136 – 132 BC) took place in Sicily. The second such revolt on this island occurred in 104 – 120 BC. One of the most serious of slave revolt took place in around 73 – 71 BC called Spartacus revolt which started in Capua (near modern Naples). All these were ruthlessly suppressed. In no society throughout human history did the use of slaves attain the same magnitude as in ancient Rome. Rome, like Greece, was not just a society with slaves, but was a slave society. Graeco-Roman society during antiquity may be regarded as a slave society because slave labour was employed on a large scale in production.

6.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have gone through around five hundred years of the history of Roman republic. It is very difficult to provide details of all aspects of this period in one unit. We, therefore, confined our discussion to select specific features and major landmarks.

The major expansion of the Roman Empire took place over a long period of time with first phase upto 280 BC and the second till the middle of the 2nd century BC. Fresh campaigns for expansion in West Asia and Africa took place in the last century of the period under study (in this unit). The main emphasis was given to the political structure and social organization in the Roman Empire. The social orders, the Senate and the Assembly were analyzed. The conflict of social orders led to the empowerment of the plebeians in Roman society. Rise of a professional army influenced the course of history of the last century. The large scale use of slaves in all sectors of the economy was another significant feature of the Roman republic. Roman civilization was so critically dependent upon slave labour that when the supply of slaves declined by the end of the second century AD, the economy began to face serious problems. These economic problems coincided with a political crisis which eventually resulted in the decline of the Roman Empire itself. The history of this decline will be discussed in Unit 10, 'Late Roman World'.

6.7 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the expansion of the Roman Empire.

2) Analyze the social orders and the role of the plebeians in Rome.

3) Explain the creation of professional army and the wars for expansion.

4) Write a short note on the institution of slavery in the Roman republic.

UNIT 7 LATIN AMERICA

Structure

7.1 Introduction
7.2 The Maya Civilization
    7.2.1 Settlements and Architecture
    7.2.2 Polity and Society
    7.2.3 Why and How did the Maya Civilization Collapse?
7.3 The Inkas
    7.3.1 Organization of Polity
    7.3.2 Economic Life
    7.3.3 Religion
7.4 The Aztecs
    7.4.1 Settlements and Organization of Polity
    7.4.2 Economic Activities
    7.4.3 Religious Life
7.5 Summary
7.6 Exercises

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The American continent came in touch with the Europeans around the end of the 15th century. The discovery followed the spree of conquests of different regions and European colonies were established. Very little was known about the history, polity and society of these regions. It was believed that the history of the region cannot be traced to early civilizations as in case of Asia and Europe.

Later on archaeological excavations and researches have shown the existence of human habitation which is more than 10000 years old. It has also come to light that from around 2500 BC to the first century AD a number of cultures flourished in the region. Many of these grew into civilizations of substantial size. Because of constraints of space it is not possible to go into the details of all the civilizations that existed in the region through the ages. We have chosen three important civilizations as representative of Latin America. These are Mayas and Aztecs in Central America and the Inkas in the Andes in South America.

There are other civilizations also whose remains have been found in both these places. But we chose these ones for the following reason. First of all the Maya and the Inkas are the most extensively studied ones so far. And in cultural representation of Latin American life mostly these are invoked. The Aztecs have been chosen, as they were the ones whose destruction has been witnessed by the colonial powers of Europe. These are the civilizations about which extensive literature exists in European languages and mostly in English.

We will first discuss the Maya, the earliest known great civilization of the region. Mayan settlements, their polity and society would be analyzed in detail. Why and how this mighty civilization collapsed will also be discussed. An account of Incas would follow the Mayas. The organization of polity and economic life of Incas will be explored. A brief account of their religious practices would also be provided. In the third section of the Unit, we will discuss the Aztecs, the civilization that flourished in the region of Mexico. While discussing Aztecs we will touch upon the organization of polity, economic activities and religious life.

7.2 THE MAYA CIVILIZATION

The Maya civilization flourished between 500B.C. and 1000A.D. (Classical period: 300-900 A.D.). The region where this civilization nestled includes modern Guatemala, Belize, southeastern Mexico, and the western parts of Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya Civilization did not present itself as an empire or unified political entity, but was a cultural unit of scattered urban and rural centres, both small and big, though many of the centres were related or rather connected with causeways. Also, the political influence of some of the large centres was evident from the use of their emblem glyphs (symbol in sculptured characters) on the monuments at smaller centres. The administrative structure also suggests that some centres were subordinate to larger city-states. At certain stage, four huge primary regional centres were emerging, each with its own emblem glyph and ruling dynasty. These were Tikal, Calakmul, Copan, and Palenque. In fact, throughout their history the Maya centres recognized only four centres as paramount, each representing one of the cardinal directions. Their monumental architecture, fine art, hieroglyph or writing, astronomy and calendar make them one of the most sophisticated civilizations of the world.

7.2.1 Settlements and Architecture

Cities and ceremonial centres are found almost in all Maya settlements and the numbers of remains of huge structures are staggering. The layout of the cities was somewhat as follows; the central ceremonial court, surrounded by a large plaza where markets were held, then were arrayed the houses of chiefs, priests, and other functionaries, and further away from these were the houses of the common people. There were other structures also from small plazas to enormous reservoirs, broad causeways, ball courts, and smaller monuments. In the highland Maya settlements there were *cenotes* (pits or wells) for procuring usable water.

The use of lime mortar and corbelled arch, was the distinguishing characteristic of the Maya architecture. In the corbelled arch, the stones are so placed that each projects a little beyond the one below it; eventually the walls meet and a vault is created. To support this type of arch, a weight mass was necessary. As a result of this a comb like design developed into the roof. This also because an overhanging to act as cantilever to the vaulting. Maya architectural façades, thus had lavish and intricate designs. Besides the spectacular Pyramids the Mayas also constructed ball courts, gateways, sweat/steam baths, vaulted bridges and raised platforms where plays were performed.

Uaxactun (A.D.328) was one of the oldest, though not one of the most elaborate instances, of the cities of the Maya. This city represents the general character of Maya Civilization. The principal temple pyramid, although only 27 feet high, is interesting since it shows the evolution of the pyramid form, which in the nearby Tikal was to reach a height of over 200 feet. The wide stairway was ornamented by stucco-masks some of which were even 8 feet high. In a series of isometric drawings the evolution of the temple complex can be seen. The first structure was a raised stone platform on which rested a wooden house. In the next stage of development, three identical temples were built with similar stairways and decorated roof-crests facing each other. There is evidence of a high priest, buried in the plaza; the floor level was raised to contain his tomb and a similar temple, presumably above the grave, was added. Slowly with the passage of years and evolution of techniques, the temple developed into a complex of buildings.

At Tikal, around first century A.D. three large platforms and two smaller ones were built on the North Acropolis. The large platforms, whose earth and rubble cores were faced with stucco, were about 4 to 4.5 metres high. Their stairways were decorated with painted stucco-masks, probably representing supernatural jaguars. Similar stucco masks were used to ornament the facades of the platforms at Cerros and at other sites. Monumental buildings were also constructed during the Late formative phase at El Mirador, Lamanai, Cuello, and Alter de Sacrificios in Peten, and at Dzibilchaltun in the northern Yucatan.

The deities whose representations were carved on the stucco masks and who were worshipped in the temples on the platforms, "may have been claimed as ancestors by the chiefly lineages. The rich burials found within Tikal's North Acropolis hint at this sort of special relationship between deities and rulers."

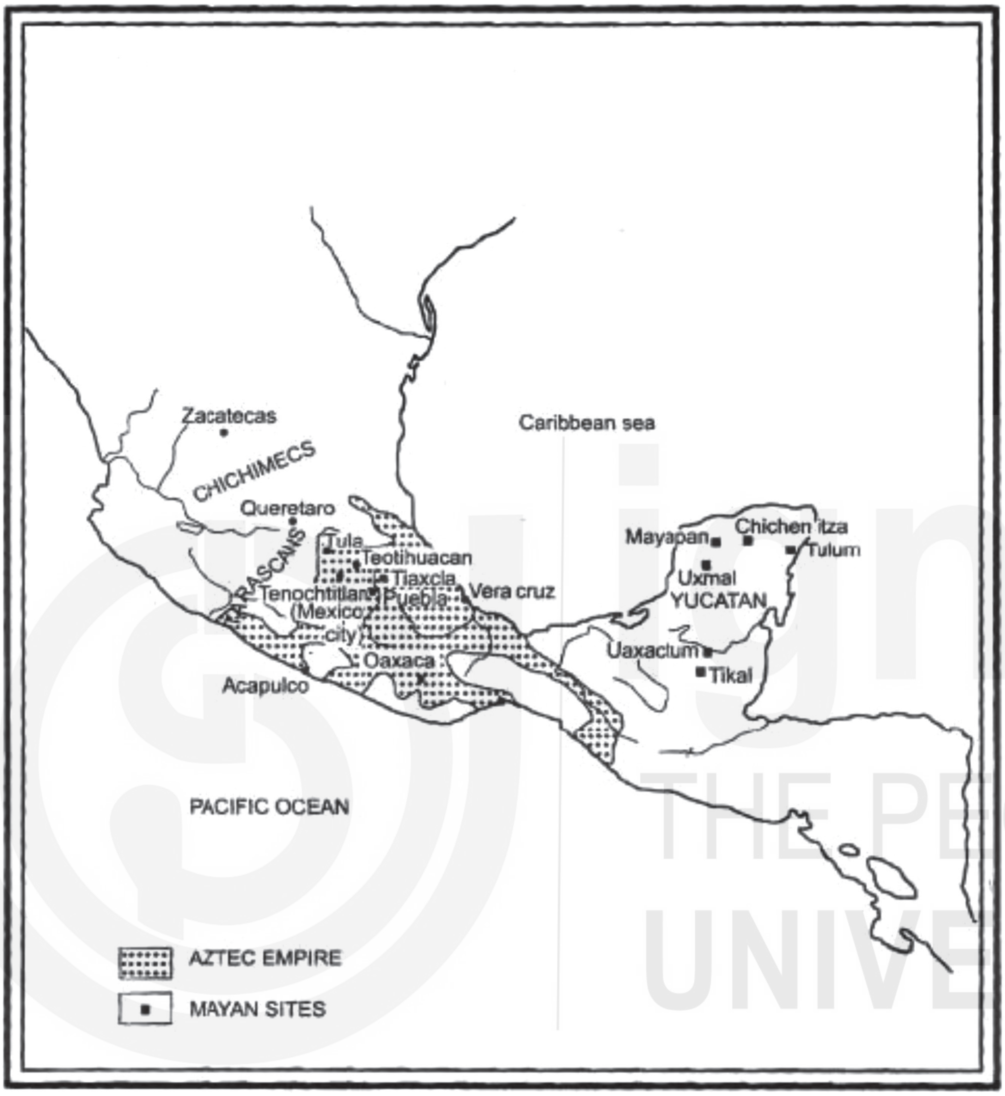
Besides the monumental structures that the Mayas built, they had simple native houses for the peasants and other plebians, called the na. It was a type of house where the material used was wood for the wall and palm leaf for thatch.

The Mayas had a system of raised causeways or a road system called *scabe* or *scabeob*. These used to connect ancient cities of the Maya. The straight causeways even traversed jungles and swamps. The height of these causeways varied from 2 to 4 feet, the width from 15 to 33 feet and the length from 600 feet to 60 to 70 miles at a stretch. These roadways or causeways were ceremonial, economic and administrative in function. Pilgrims, who had a 'right of asylum', must have walked along these causeways from the hinterland to the elite/ceremonial/urban centres carrying offerings, tributes, as also goods for trade. The causeways did not only connect the hinterland with the centre but also connected different many centres.

The Mayas also used the sea-route. The first things that Columbus encountered when he landed at Guanaja in 1502 were the Maya boats. At one island he saw and examined one "as long as a galley, 8 feet in breadth, rowed by 25 Indian paddlers," and laden with commodities –cocoa, copper-bells, flint-edged swords, cotton cloth- brought from the mainland, twenty miles distant.

7.2.2 Polity and Society

The head of the Maya city-states were the "real men", or the *halach uinic*. This office was neither elective nor selective. It was hereditary. The office descended from father to son. If the lord died, then it was the eldest son who succeeded him. However, if the sons of the chief were not fit to rule then, a brother or relative of the ruler became the chief. The *halach uinic* were both the spiritual and temporal authority of their city-states. Subordinate to him and chiefs of other cities, or in other words local governors under the *halach uinic*, were a set of officials who were known as *ahau* or more commonly *batabob*. The *batabobs* were, more than likely, related to the *halach uinic* by blood ties.


Zacatecas
CHICHIMECS
Queretaro
TARASCANS
Tula
Teotihuacan
Tlaxcla
Tenochtitlan (Mexico city)
Puebla
Vera cruz
Oaxaca
Acapulco
Caribbean sea
Mayapan
Chichen itza
Tulum
Uxmal
YUCATAN
Uaxactum
Tikal
PACIFIC OCEAN
▨ AZTEC EMPIRE
■ MAYAN SITES

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Map: (Not to Scale)

A *batabob* was responsible for the governance of his own resident city. He also had a retinue of deputies to assist him. Besides this there was a town council constituted of the chiefs of the various subdivisions of the town. Though nominally under the *batabob*, they could veto any move by the *batabob*. These councilors were called ah *cuch cabob*.

The *batabob* settled disputes, usually contract violations and land disputes. And when the priests made known their oracles (prophesies or advice) as to when the people should sow, reap, or make merry, the *batabob* saw to it that the functions were carried out. In the time of war, although the *batabob* was the de facto head of the province, actual command was in the hands of a war captain, known as *nacom*, who was elected for three years. But at times of necessity the *batabob* also used to lead his army as against the Spaniards. The *batabobs* also collected tax and tribute.

The commoners used to carry the *batabob* in a litter (an Indian *palki*), wherever he used to go. They also used to serve him in many other ways. There were a great many people who made up a bureaucracy, which was quite exacting; governors, bailiffs, war captains, and down to the lowest, the *tupil*, or a constable. All these officials constituted the upper class and never paid any tax.

The commoners or the peasants used to serve the men of upper class in many ways. As labourers, both skilled and unskilled, they built the enormous plazas and pyramids; as skilled artisans they needed to cut and lay stones, to plaster, to carve and cast and as unskilled labourers they filled the ditch with mud and helped the skilled craftsmen in numerous ways. They were the primary producers also. The Maya agriculture was quite varied with innumerable kinds of crops, fruit bearing plants, dye producing plants etc., all of which needed different kinds of attention and labour, though maize was the primary crop. Beside maize, they planted beans, grew squash and pumpkin, sweet potato, sweet cassava, a kind of turnip.

Land and salt pits were communally owned. Individual community members were assigned plots of land to cultivate and grow food. Availability of water was a regular problem for the Maya in spite of the fact that the entire zone used to get high rainfall. Except the settlements, which were near rivers, availability of water was difficult. In the lowland settlements, the surface soil was thin and could not retain water, the rainwater used to seep into the subsoil, due to the porous limestone. Tikal repeatedly suffered droughts though it was in the wettest area. There the engineers had cemented an entire ravine of porous limestones near the plaza and had created a giant sized reservoir.

There was Chac, the rain god, who had to be propitiated (appeased) before the agricultural operations. There was also Yum Kaax or the corn god, who had to be worshipped. There was a ritual for every activity of planting, sowing and harvesting,. In one of the Maya codices it was stated, "This is the record of year-bears of the *unial…*" This was a weather forecasting based on the observations of the last year. "In the ninth month, Chen (moon), and the tenth Yax (Venus), planting was to be done during certain lucky days." The scribe-priest or the chilan, used to guide the peasants on this, yet much of this was based on the observation of earth-bound man or the peasant, who related them to the priests. The priest in turn put it all down in glyph script so that it could be remembered. The high priest, called *Ahkin*, was also the teacher in Maya society. A Bonampak mural details the role (and power) of the High priest in the Maya society. He used to teach how to compute years, months, days, festivals and ceremonies, fateful days and seasons, in short, to read glyph and to interpret the almanac. But this was not taught to the men of the lower class. It was reserved for the nobles and the priests' sons.

The Maya peasants used to store food grains for rainy days. The lower section of the Maya society was also made to pay the tax or tribute. Maize was the first tax. Part of a farmer's surplus was turned over to the 'state' depositories. Then, as a form of work-service tax, the personal maize fields of priest and nobility were cultivated and harvested. Construction was also a part of personal tax. The houses of the upper classes were built by the common men at their own expense. The causeways were built as part of the work service; it was carried out by *corvee* (forced labour) by the clans that lived near the road. Working for the construction of Public building, was the principal labour tax. It is quite evident that enormous religious centres, temple cities, causeways, ball courts, etc. presupposed a complex social organization with mechanism to appropriate work/service and products. The nobles, priests, and civil and military officials lived on the tax-tribute of the man of the lower rungs of society. In addition a sizeable number of artisans, who decorated the temples, carved the stelae, were supported out of the accumulated surplus brought to the official storage chambers by the tax-paying Maya. Whether the necessity of labour made the Maya people to fight and capture slaves is not known. But they used to go into wars, capture slaves and employ them for various tasks as well as sacrifice some of them to propitiate their gods.

Beside working in the fields, weaving was one of the main occupation of the Maya. Both men and women were engaged in this. They used to carve and make baskets, rope, mat, and pots. Exchange of goods and trade with other people was a regular activity. But one of the most significant features of Maya culture was the calendar and the hieroglyph. The Maya had three different calendars. The *haab* year was of 18 periods or months, of twenty days each, plus a terminal period of five days called *Uayeb* (the empty or unlucky days). The second was the tzolkin, a sacred calendar of 260 days. The third calendar was the "long count," which reckoned the number of days since the mythical beginning of the Maya era, which was dated 4*Ahau* 8*Chamhu* for reasons inexplicable till date (equivalent to B.C. 3111). In this calendar, 20 *kins* or days made a Maya month (uinal). 18 *Uinals* and 5 Uayeb made a *tun* (year) of 365 days. Next came the *katun*, a period of 7200 days or 20 years. And 52 years made a cycle of years. The nine known Maya time periods, such as days, months etc., had corresponding glyphs. Glyph actually was their language to record, which has so far not been completely deciphered. Only those glyphs, which pertain to calendars etc., have been somehow read.

7.2.3 Why and How did the Maya Civilization Collapse?

Around the 9th century A.D., the Mayan construction of buildings seems to have stopped, marking the beginning of the collapse of the civilization. But how and why did it happen? There are many explanations offered by scholars speculating on this question. Some scholars have argued that it was an epidemic such as malaria or yellow fever, or it might have been the social consequence of some calamity such as a drought or earthquake. Some others have suggested that the reason was an agricultural collapse, or peasant uprisings, or severing of trade routes, even an invasion by the Mexicans.

There was a demographic change during the Late Classic phase due to growth of population. Consequently there was a pressure on the limited agricultural resource of the region. There is some archeological evidence, of the Late Classic time, in the form of human skeletons of commoners mostly. The skeletons attest stunted growth, scurvy, anemia, and periodontal disease, suggesting malnutrition, which in turn, implies food shortages. To overcome the food shortage, the people might have intensified the use of the natural resources available as shortening of the interval of leaving land fallow or burning forest to clear land to extend cultivation. Such agricultural activities must have led, in the long run, to change in rain-fall pattern, fertility of the soil and so on. It is suggested that this caused agricultural exhaustion and ecological disaster leading to the decline of the civilization. But such explanation fails to answer the question as to why the growing population did not increase the kind of agriculture, which they used to practice. Why did they change over to a different and detrimental practice? Some other ways of looking at the agricultural crisis and the decline of the Mayas have to be found. This question becomes more important in the light of the recent archeological discoveries of the practice of a very intensive agriculture in this civilization.

Peasant rebellion being one of the causes of the decline of the Maya civilization has been largely derived from a reading of the Bonampak (a Maya site) murals (which apparently depicts captured peasant rebels) and the evidence of attacks on the monuments and consequent mutilation and destruction of those monuments, (which were symbols of the elite power and domination). This explanation has its protagonists and detractors. The detractors would say that Bonampak murals may be representing any captured commoners or nobles and not necessarily that of peasant rebels; and that the rebels could not be upsetting the demography of the place if they eliminated the nobles, who were a small fraction only. But the fact is that the elite centre did not constitute the Maya culture or civilization. It was only a part of the culture. And the rebel peasant did not intend to make difference in population figures but must have tried to reconstitute the social relationship. That is why we have flourishing villages even after the collapse of elite centres, as in Belize valley. The relation established between the finding of Fine paste pottery and Mexican invasion seems quite tenuous, if not untenable.

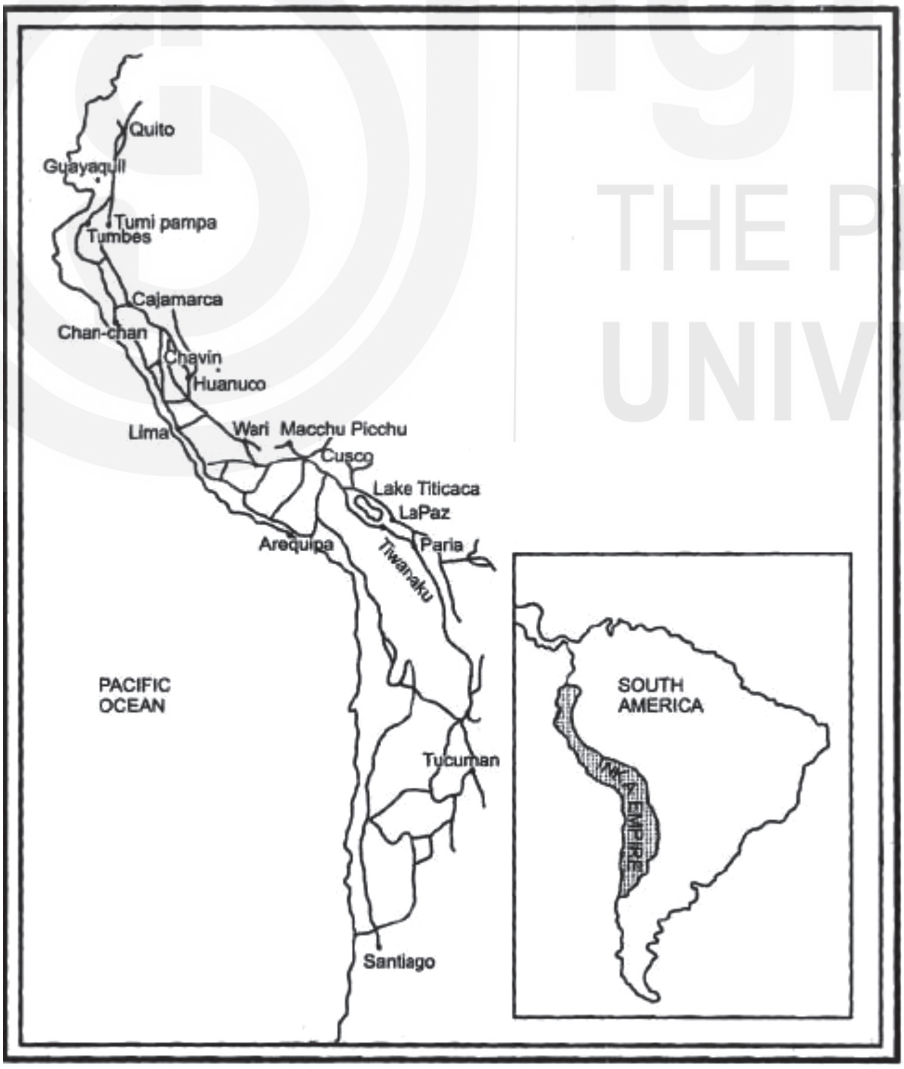
The decline and demise of the Maya civilization was no doubt a complex process. It involved the competition between different settlements over the control of trade routes of the west and war for the same. Rebellion from within can never be ruled out as various nobilities to remain in power used to extract immense amount of surplus from the peasants and producers. These exploited groups might have remained as disgruntled elements of the society. They were no more willing to bear the burden in the name of the divine and were ready to overthrow the system. Here one can ascribe a role for the Aztec or Mexicans, who came as merchants and traders and taking advantage of the situation started dominating over the centres and then controlling and displacing them as well. The decline and demise, however cannot be put as a uniform story for all the settlements, certain variation between settlements might have existed.

7.3 THE INKAS

The Inka (or Inca) civilization territorially spread over parts of modern Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, or the central Andean highlands, and for a substantial part of their history they were under a single Inca state called Tawantinsuyu, between 12th and 16th centuries A.D. The Inka civilization or more correctly, the Inka Empire had dominated over other lesser pre-Inkan societies and settlements from 13th Century till the coming of the Spanish Conquistadors in 1532 AD. The Incas of Cusco had dominated over various 'ethnic' communities in the entire region. The ethnic communities had tension and conflict among themselves, which was probably advantageous to the Spanish conquistadors (Spanish conquerors of Peru & Mexico). The pre-Inkan communities, who were settled agriculturists were the Chavin, Mochica, Nazca, Paraca, and Chimu amongst others. Don Franscisco Cusichaq, lord of Xauxa, the earliest colonial capital had testified that he "regretted having opened the country to the Europeans."

7.3.1 Organization of Polity

The consolidation of the Inca power occurred between 13th and 15th centuries (AD). The Incas united a vast territory with an extensive network of paved roads radiating outward from their central city of Cuzco. This, of course, happened during the 15th century when Cusco, "changed from being the nucleus of a local polity to being a major urban centre, capital of the Tawantinsuyu described by the Europeans. It was not only the administrative headquarters of the Inka realm but also a ceremonial centre, where a hundred pieces of fine cloth were sacrificed daily and scores of priests fasted while watching the movements of the sun from their palace-observatories." The roads measured more than 20,000 kilometres in length and facilitated the movement of troops and officials, luxury and exotic goods, and transmission of information as well. This network of roads also facilitated control of the many ethnic groups, which constituted the Tawantinsuyu. Many of the roads existed prior to Inka supremacy and were only maintained and used by the Tawantinsuyu. In mountain terrains the roads were cut out of bedrock; particularly steep slopes were traversed by means of stone steps or zigzags. Wherever the highways had to be carried across wide rivers, suspension bridges were built with cables made by braiding twigs and vines and were strung between stone towers on either bank of the river. These bridges were maintained by particular villages responsible for reweaving, on a regular basis. Relay runners were stationed along the roads, at intervals of a


Quito
Guayaquil
Tumi pampa
Tumbes
Cajamarca
Chan-chan
Chavin
Huanuco
Lima
Wari
Macchu Picchu
Cusco
Lake Titicaca
LaPaz
Paria
Arequipa
Tiwanaku
PACIFIC OCEAN
Tucuman
Santiago
SOUTH AMERICA
INKA EMPIRE

Map: (not to scale)

The Inka Empire

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

kilometre or so, who memorized and transmitted government messages. The Inka expansion was achieved, it has been suggested, by "absorbing whole political entities, not separate villages or valleys. The local lords were fitted into a system of 'indirect rule'; it was they who enforced and administered the new order, which may have seemed novel since its ideology claimed no more than a projection onto a wider screen of patterns of existing authority."

The European conquistadors had found that there were several ethnic groups spread all over. At Huallaga, in today's central Peru, the Europeans found a Chupaychu community as big as containing 4000 households in the Inka's decimal system of accounting. There were smaller ones also of only 200 'fires' with their separate coca-leaf gardens. The local lords remained responsible to the royal officers of the Inkas, for 10, 50, 100, 200, 1000, 'fires' or households.

Although generally left alone to govern the region, the local lord's son was required to be sent to Cusco, the Inka capital. There they were educated at the court in the Quechua language of the Inka. [The language of the Inka was referred to as Quechua by the Europeans. The speakers of this language though refer to it as runa simi, 'tounge of the people.' Aymara and its dialect as Kauki, were also extensively used languages in this region.]

Royal functionaries were placed along the roads at administrative centres and used to inspect and oversee the subject provincial lords and their territories. These functionaries used to summarily punish the local lords or subordinate rulers if they used to find them guilty of: i) disobedience of any royal inspector, ii) rebellion, iii) not depositing dues, iv) engaging his people in personal service, v) or engaging them in works which hindered performance of their own duties, or for other similar offences. The local lords were removed from their offices and their able sons or brothers or other near relatives were appointed in their place. In case of rebellion the local lord and his kin were all executed. The local lords were not always from the local ethnic communities. They could be any royal kin, or when they ran out of kin, some promoted loyal inhabitant from neighbouring villages were appointed as local governors and were known as *allikaq*.

The local lords and their communities provided labour services as well as military services to the Inkas at Cusco according to the principle of mit'a. According to this principle each commoner and community was obliged to devote some of his time and energy for the works of the state. The communities mobilized both men and women for public works on rotation, *allyu* by *allyu*, one ethnic group after another. For military services they used to bring their own arms and weapons. Some communities, such as the Chimu who were a coastal community, were sending artisans and women to Cusco but were not expected to do military services, probably because they were unfit for battles at high altitudes. Also certain other ethnic groups as the Aymaras, stated that they were warriors only, of a superior nature, and therefore, cited precedence when they were exempt from other tributes, taxes, any other services or public works. Public works included such acts as construction of buildings, attending ritual ceremonies and paying tribute, or giving personal services as herding, or serving as mit'a at the court at Cusco, or working as masons and weavers of cloth, or carpenters or quarrying and farming. It may have included working as dancers and clowns in the court as well. The Inka armies were rewarded with *cicha* (corn-beer) and clothes.

7.3.2 Economic Life

Historians also suspect that the long military services from certain communities might have had adverse consequence on their agricultural practice, which were quite labour intensive. They used to grow many varieties of tubers (as potatoes and sweet-potatoes), the *Kinuwa* (a high altitude grain with high content of protein), the *Tarwi* (a fodder plant with long tapering spikes of varying colours of Lupin family which is rich in fats), the thirst-quenching coca-leaf. Maize was, it appears, the staple crop, in most parts of the Inka territories. They fed their populace using advanced agricultural techniques, including terrace cultivation, crop rotation, and irrigation. It is quite amazing that, "In many regions, the canal systems, terraces and ridged fields made it possible to cultivate at least 35% more land than at present. Whether this discrepancy is due to social, technological, economic, or environmental factors is a question, which has puzzled the archeologist". *Ayllu*, supposed to be a lineage, owned the land for all its members. There was no individual landholding in Quechua or Inka. At this stage of our knowledge of the Inkas, we are not sure how this social unit held people of different classes together. The *ayllu* also held the herds of the community.

The Andean topography had very little land in the first place. The climate was, as it is now also, that of extremes; the day temperature of blistering heat contrasts sharply with the freezing cold nights, the difference of temperature between day and night being 25-30 degree Celsius. Pastures were/are widely dispersed. The dry lands of the coastal belt needed irrigation facilities. But the Andean or Inka peasant had overcome all these disadvantages and harnessed these to their own benefit. They used to process and preserve vegetables and all edible flesh by freezing in the night and drying out in the sun the next day. These frozen foods were known as *ch'unu* and *charki*, and possibly by many more names. These were not only preserved for long durations but were also easy to transport. Similarly the need of water for the desert plantations on the coast, was fulfilled by irrigation canals from the Andean glaciers. Many a times these irrigation canals were the cause of tension between the highlanders and the coastal people. The highlanders were in such a position that they could easily cut and divert these canals, stopping supply of water to the coastal people.

Salt, fish and edible algae were available at the coast. At very high altitude of Lake Titicaca, tuber was available as also animals which provided meat and wool. At the middle level maize was abundant, a crop which had some ceremonial importance also. Exchange used to take place between these different ecological tiers. But more interestingly, people from one tier used to go, or rather were sent, and settled at other tiers to produce and procure the products for themselves. These people were called colonists or *mitmaq*. Some historians, of course, maintain that *mitmaq* or *mitima* were loyal colonists brought by the Inkas to settle in newly acquired territories, whereas ethnic groups, who were likely to cause trouble were sent off to distant places.

The *mitmaq* could be as far as 'a day's walk' from their native place or their kinsmen or more. Gradually, it seems, the distances increased to eight days' walk, ten days' walk and so on, indicating growth of complex mechanism for the colonist's access to the product and also sociability, marriage of offspring and ceremonial participation at the nucleus. During the Inka times, when the communication system was better organized and it was safer, or in other words the hegemonic presence of the state was strongest, then one could find mitmaqs at a distance of 60 to 80 days' walk from their ethnic communities. In the Inka census the mitmaqs were enumerated at their native place or nucleus.

These settlements of *mitmaqs* probably led to crafts specialization. Besides being ecologically specific, the settlement, for some historical reason, became artisan specific. There are evidence from Lupaqa of a village of potters and another village of metallurgists. During the Inca times, new functions had been assigned to the mitmaq; near Huancane on the shore of Lake Titicaca, there was a manufacturing centre run by the state, a village where 'a thousand weavers' and 'a hundred potters' used to work. 'Chosen women' separated from their own ethnic surroundings were occupied in fulltime weaving which had a special place in the Inca political/ ritual life. During the Inka times again, the state used the mitmaq for military services to suppress rebellions and to expand the territorial boundaries. To guard the fortress of Colpagua, the mitmaqs had received the town of Guarapa, where people of their ethnicity produced and provided them with food. This is again an attestation of the sophistications of the Inka polity as the Inka state expanded both territorially and demographically. Earlier when the scale of operation was small, the state parceled out lands to various local governors or lords, who in turn got the land worked by the local community by rotation, lineage by lineage, as they had worked the fields of their lords or that of the temple. With the expansion of the Inka state, mitmaq were sent to ensure the Inka rule and revenue. This was affected through the old lords and therefore remained an 'indirect rule.' There was no tribute or tax to be paid, nothing was demanded of the peasants, which they themselves had grown or had stored.

7.3.3 Religion

It was not only in the matters of governance and collection of revenue that the old lords were retained by the Inka rulers. In the matters of religion too the local religious beliefs were respected, though the people of the acquired territory were asked to worship the Inka lords of nature as the Sun and the Mother Earth. The deity of the local community was taken to Cuzco, where it was placed either in the Temple of the Sun or in a special shrine and it was looked after by a priestly staff recruited from that province.

Human Sacrifices were part of rituals performed by the Inkas. They developed a calendar and a decimal number system. Yet they did not have money or probably did not feel its necessity. They also did not have wheel. Though they had no script or practice of writing, yet they kept records. They used to keep records in knotted strings called *quipu* or *khipu*. On pieces of cloths they even painted maps. Textiles, besides being used for clothing, had a ritual value also. In fact, a lot of burial cloth has also been discovered by archeologists. The corn-stores were a unique feature of the Inka architecture. In Huanaca Pampa, 480 buildings have been discovered which had a storage capacity of almost 40,000 cubic metres, where thousands of tons of potatoes, corn and other goods were kept. In the vast expanse of their territory the Incas used one language, Quechua, which symbolized the cultural unity of the civilization in spite of the varieties of ethnicity included in it.

7.4 THE AZTECS

This too, like the Maya, was a Central American civilization. It flourished between the 12th and 15th century. The present region of Mexico was the area where this civilization flourished. It was a vast empire spread in around an area of 20000 square kilometers. The empire was divided into a number of provinces (38). Each of the provinces was ruled by a governor who ruled over the tribes in the region. It was the last indigenous civilization, before the Spanish colonized Mexico.

7.4.1 Settlements and Organization of Polity

The Aztecs supplanted the Toltecs around 1100 AD and established settlements which grew into a sophisticated polity in the Americas. It is said that the ultimate dominance of the Aztecs over the Toltecs lay not only in their intrepid, highly skilled society, but also in the Aztec's systematic, sacrificial method of dealing with the enemy. They were a conquering tribe who gradually extended their influence over the neighbouring tribes/settlements and people such as the Totonacs, Tabascans, Tlaxcalans and the Cholulans. These tribes used to pay 'taxes' to the Aztecs and follow their own forms of governance and worship their own deity. Still the Aztec tax-collectors with crooked staffs wearing richly coloured and embroidered cloaks would appear and ask them to provide victims for sacrifice at the temple of Huitzlopochtli (the Aztecs' deity). The 'taxes' or the tributes they paid to the Aztecs were in kind such as maize, fish, gold, jade and turquoises, birds and animals. Often they used to contribute by feeding the Aztec garrisons and providing land to Aztec nobles/officers.

The Aztecs established the twin towns of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco on the western shore of lake Texoco in the early 14th century (in 1325 or 1345). (Tlatelolco was absorbed to Tenochtitlan around 1500.) And their ultimate domination of the region was signified by the rule of Moctezuma II (1502-20). This was the period of pinnacle of glory of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. Significant achievements of the Aztec civilizations included the establishment of a canal system, public buildings, and wide roads and causeways. The wealthy and vast capital of Tenochtitlan (on which today Mexico City stands) exemplified the accomplishments of the Aztecs.

Drawing on the surpluses of the conquered tribes the Aztecs built their capital Tenochtitlan into a wonderful city. The gigantic monuments and their grandeur, even in dilapidated conditions, attest this. This city grew on an island and extended into the lake Texoco by means of floating gardens and by pushing piles into the shallow water of the lake. It was connected to the mainland by three causeways, which were as wide as 30 feet. It appears that many of the settlements were connected with their neighbouring settlements with causeways as Ixtapalapan and Coyoacan. Tenochtitlan was protected from flooding or any rise in the level of water in the lake by a concrete dyke across the lake Texoco. This dyke apparently divided the lake into two. There was an embankment also built to protect the city on the port end or the southern end. This was kept lit in the night by flaming braziers. The peasants from Anahuac used to visit this port in their canoes laden with various agricultural products as tributes. The city was getting drinking water from Chapultepec by two aqueducts, which reflects planning and sense of hygiene and health of the Aztecs. Besides the temples, which were huge structures, the elite used to live in stone houses, which were either red or whitewashed. And the plebeians, quarters were away from the centre of the city (which was the temple and market complex), and their houses were of mud and thatch.

7.4.2 Economic Activities

The Aztecs used cocoa beans, cotton cloaks, copper blades, small folded mantles, and quills filled with gold dust as standard units of value or money/ currency in their commercial dealings. But the chief means of exchange was either barter or units of hours of works.

Tenochtitlan had a market complex, which was divided into many sections, each section was with its specialized merchandise. In the first section gold, silver and precious stones like jade from the country of the Zapotecs, and feathers & mosaics made from the feathers of birds by the Tarascans were sold. In the second chocolate and all kinds of spices; in the third cloth and all kinds of clothing material as well as slaves and animals; in the fourth foods such as corn, bean, tomatoes, chiles, seeds, salt, turkeys, deer meat, rabbits, hares, ducks, honey, vanilla, rubber, cochineal, beehives, pottery etc; so on and so forth. The market place actually was not only a place of exchanging material goods. It was also a place for social communication.

7.4.3 Religious Life

At the meeting place of the main three causeways was the temple enclosure, surrounded by an eight-foot wall, which was surmounted by snakes of carved stones. There were more than thirty temples in the enclosure and included ones dedicated to Huitzilopochtli the chief deity of the Aztecs and also to the chief deity of the Toltecs and other deities of the conquered tribes. Not only the deities of the conquered people were admitted into the Aztec pantheon but also the conquered people were allowed to retain their political system and social practices without any interference or imposition.

7.5 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we discussed the Mayas, the Incas and the Aztecs, the three important civilizations that emerged in Latin America. You must have noticed that all three had some common features. Maize is one of the common crops of all the three is the staple food. Constructions of broad roads connecting importance centres of each of these civilizations are another common feature. All the three had well spread habitats with huge structures and buildings and monuments. (mostly in ruins now). Another striking common feature is the knowledge and use of calendars. However, all the three emerged at different periods of time. The Maya civilization was the earliest and survived the longest period of time. The Mayan settlements were widely spread with developed architectural style. They had network of raised roads built in a unique way connecting all the main centres and hinter land (with arterial roads). The polity was organized in a sort of city states ruled by hereditary officers. The society was stratified with peasantry at the lower strata and their surplus produce as the main source of state's revenue. This civilization declined after 900 A.D. There are various opinions about the causes of its down fall. It is difficult to ascribe a single factor for it.

Both Inkas and Aztecs were near contemporary and their fall was caused by the conquest of these regions by Europeans and they were subordinated. However, certain social features and language could survive even after long colonial rule. The Inkas had cusco as their principal city well connected with other parts of the empire with a defined system of administration and governance. The provincial lords provided the revenue and military services to the central authority. The Inkas practiced developed agricultural techniques with canals for irrigation. Large areas were cultivated with common land holdings. The Aztects were mainly a warrior trible. They realized taxes from the subjugated tribes. They established the city of Tenochtitlan as their Capital. The city had separate residential areas for the ruling group and plebians. They had organized economic life with developed inland trade.

7.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the Maya civilization giving reference to its polity and society.

2) Explain the possible reasons of the decline of the Maya civilization.

3) Give a brief account of polity and economic life of the Inkas.

4) Write a note on the Aztec civilization.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 8 AFRICA

Structure

8.1 Introduction
8.2 North Africa
  8.2.1 A Chronology
  8.2.2 Pharaonic Egypt
  8.2.3 Pyramids and Egyptian Religion
  8.2.4 Kingship
  8.2.5 Organization of Government and Society
8.3 West Africa
  8.3.1 Background
  8.3.2 Some Major Monarchies of West Africa
  8.3.3 Society, Economy and Polity
8.4 South Africa
  8.4.1 Mapping the Communities
  8.4.2 Economy
  8.4.3 The Bride Wealth
  8.4.4 Organization of Government
8.5 Summary
8.6 Exercises

8.1 INTRODUCTION

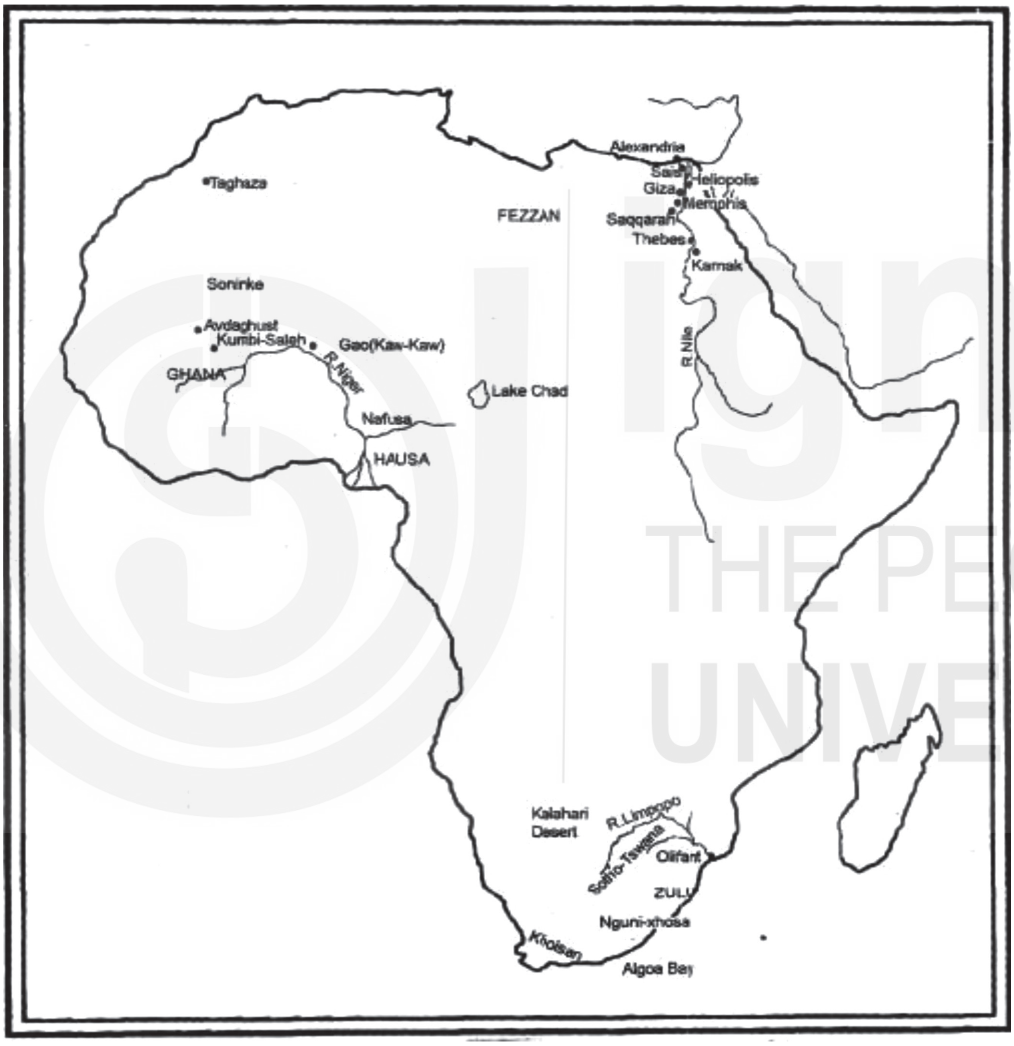
For a long period of time the knowledge about Africa was limited to some areas of North Africa which came in contact with the Asia and Europe from ancient times. However, very little was known about the vast areas of Africa called sub-Saharan Africa. In the 15th century Europeans made inroads in Africa but it was with a limited purpose of indulging in salve trade. These slaves were captured and taken to work in plantations in Americas. In the 19th century the colonization of large parts of Africa began and Europeans ruled over them in the 19th and larger parts of 20th centuries. Africa was seen by them as less civilized, less developed and at an infant stage of development in its history. But again, as in the case of Latin Americas, so also here, this view has been questioned and historical and archeological research has found instances of indigenous African civilizations, which compare favourably with any contemporary civilization of the world. We shall see some of them here.

It is very difficult to discuss in one Unit the history of such a vast continent with different languages, cultures, social and economic life. We would, therefore, confine our discussion in this Unit to a few selected regions only. In an attempt to be geographically distributive in as vast a territory as Africa, we have chosen three different civilizations, one from the South, one from the West and another from the North.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

In each of these regions the features are not uniformly discussed. In each we will take up the salient features specific to the region. First we will discuss North Africa. You have already studied in detail the Egyptian civilization. Again we are including it as a section of this Unit to have a cohesive discussion on Africa.

In this section, we will focus on the polity of Pharaonic Egypt. We will also provide a brief account of society and religion during the period. In the second section of the Unit, we will take account of West Africa. Our discussion will mainly be confined to Ghana, Mali and Kanem. A brief account of monarchies in this region would be provided. Some space would be devoted to society, economy and polity also. In the third section we will cover South Africa. In South Africa we intend to discuss different communities, society economy and organization of government.


Alexandria
Sais
Heliopolis
Giza
Memphis
Taghaza
FEZZAN
Saqqarah
Thebes
Karnak
Soninke
Avdaghust
Kumbi-Saleh
Gao(Kaw-Kaw)
R.Niger
R.Nile
GHANA
Lake Chad
Nafusa
HAUSA
Kalahari Desert
R.Limpopo
Sotho-Tswana
Olifant
ZULU
Nguni-xhosa
Khoisan
Algoa Bay

Map: (Not to Scale)
Map of Africa

8.2 NORTH AFRICA

The Nile Valley civilization has been a fascination for not only archeologists and historians but also for the common tourists. The high Pyramids and the Sphinx have been architectural marvels of the ancient civilization of this region. It has often been said that Egypt was more of an Arabic civilization than an African one. But this has been refuted. It has been asserted, that "Egypt was African in its way of writing, in its culture, and in its way of thinking, in spite of the fact that it borrowed from outside cultures as it is situated at the convergence of outside influences".

8.2.1 A Chronology

The Ancient Civilization of the Nile Valley dates back to prior to 3000 B.C. Historians have, for convenience, classified the history of the region in the following chronological fashion, first is the Pre-dynastic settlements, then the Pharoanic Egypt divided into Old, Middle and New Kingdoms and spanning 31 dynasties till 332 B.C. The next was the Ptolemic or the Hellenic period following the conquest of Alexander the Great. The Romans occupied Egypt and ruled over it from 30 B.C to 345A.D. Thereafter, the Byzantine rulers were the masters of Egypt. From 642A.D. the Arabs became the rulers of Egypt till 1517 A.D. , when the Ottoman Turks took over. In 1798 A.D., the French entered Egypt for a brief period and the British occupied it from 1882 A.D.

8.2.2 Pharaonic Egypt

The Pharaohs' Egypt has also been chronologically mapped as follows. The first interval known as the Old Kingdom was founded by Zoser or Djoser of the Third Dynasty. During the entire length of this kingdom there was no standing army of the King or the Pharaoh. Around 2200 B.C., the Old Kingdom ended with the Sixth Dynasty. During the Old Kingdom the first Pyramids were built. The Old Kingdom was followed by almost two centuries of rivalry and fighting between the nobles of various principalities, which is known as the First Intermediate period.

By 2050 B.C., in the Eleventh Dynasty, again centralized rule was established and continued till 1786 B.C. This rule is known as the Middle Kingdom and had its capital at Thebes in Upper Egypt. This period is significant for its focus on utilitarian projects such as construction of drainage system and irrigation facilities. Few pyramids were built during this period. The Egyptian religion also seems to have changed a little in its emphasis on this life than on life after death as in the Old kingdom. From 1786 B.C. to 1560 B.C., again the rule of Pharaohs was challenged by the Hyksos (or the rulers of foreign land). The Hyksos were tribes of western Asia who used horse and chariot in wars. This period of foreign invasion and instability was known as the Second Intermediate Period.

The rulers of the Upper Egypt revolted against the Hyksos and finally in the year 1560 B.C., Ahmose, who founded the Eighteenth Dynasty, succeeded in driving the invaders out and establishing indigenous rule in Egypt again. This was the beginning of the New Kingdom or the Empire, which continued till 1087 B.C. During the New Kingdom/Empire, the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and the Twentieth Dynasties ruled. During these rules, the Pharaoh had a standing army, unlike the earlier ones.

8.2.3 Pyramids and Egyptian Religion

The mention of Egypt commonly evokes the images of the Pyramids and the Sphinx. Djoser, the second king of the 3rd dynasty was the first one who is given credit for building the earliest pyramid. The pyramid that he got built is generally known as the Step Pyramid of Saqqarah. A short distance from Saqqarah, towards the south, is the more sophisticated rhomboidal pyramid at Dahshur. This was built by a king named Snefru of the 4th dynasty. The other well-known pyramids are found at Giza which were built by pharaohs Khufu, Khafre and Menkure.

The pyramids were built to house the mummy of the dead ruler. The burial chamber of the ruler was surrounded by other burials as well as a complex of temples built to worship gods and the dead rulers. These burials include the ruler's servants, wives and sometimes children too. Within the tombs were placed furniture, jewelry other crafted objects and some personal belonging of the deceased. As the times passed by, the nobility also started having mastabas, or rectangular stone burials close to the pyramids of the rulers. The building of pyramids suffered a setback during the end of the Old Kingdom because of civil war, political instability and economic depression. But this architecture again revived under the New Kingdom (1539-1075 BC). It was during the regime of the New Kingdom that the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings got built at Thebes.

The Egyptians believed in the continuity of life after death. When a king died it was believed that he would continue to rule in his after life as Osiris or the dead king. Therefore they kept many precious and useable goods for the dead king in the pyramid. Cults were developed after the dead kings and they were worshipped along with other gods in temples.

Before the political unification in 2925 BC, there were various local cults and guardian deities. After unification a syncretism started which could associate any number of gods with many others without any apparent contradiction. The sun god Ra/Re had universal acceptance because of his universal presence. Temple was a place where people used to assemble and worship. It was thus the symbol of their locality and community. At times local temples also served as national symbols such as the temple of Ra at Heliopolis during the Old Kingdom, and the temple of Neith at Sais during the 26th dynasty. Temples also, with the passage of time, had assumed major economic and political roles. Towards the end of the New Kingdom, the temple of Amon Ra at Karnak was the chief political authority in the entire Upper Egypt. The temple, or the priests to be more precise, had not only religious obligations but administrative responsibilities also, such as looking after the arable lands, flocks, mines and granaries, treasuries, river-transport, dispensing justice and so on.

The Pharaohs were ruling as the agents of god or sons of god on earth and were known as Horus. Horus was supposed to look after the maa't, which was justice/fairplay or a perfect order created by gods for man on earth. We find in the papyrus writing the King Semsret-I said, "He (the god HorAkhty) created me as one who should do that which he had done, and to carry out that which he commanded should be done. He appointed me as herdsman of this land, for he knew who would keep it in order for him." In the literature at the end of the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom, the theme of chaotic society abounds, where chaos was caused by natural calamities, foreign aggression, absence of 'justice', etc. The king was supposed to be generous and pious a herdsman for such a society. It is, of course, quite difficult to map the changes in the concept and perception of the king of the Egyptians, for the entire Pharoanic period due to lack of sources available so far.

8.2.4 Kingship

The Egyptians believed that the kingship was a divine office. But this divine office was not free from worldly games of power such as family intrigues, usurpation etc. In a book, which is a manual for the use of royal power for the coming generations of Kings, named the 'Instruction of King Amenemhat', the King mentions about the intrigues and treachery surrounding the divine office of the King. The dynastic changes in the history of Pharaonic regimes have not been explained fully. Usurpation has been established at least in one case. King Amenemhat-I, the founder of the 12th Dynasty, was the vizier of the previous King.

Disputes of succession of Kingship also could not be ruled out. The rule that the son or the eldest son (primogeniture) succeeding the King, might have been flouted. The practice of co-regency or overlapping reigns during the 12th dynasty, in which the heir was made the king while the father was alive and his reign was recognized from the time of declaration is an attestation of the fact that rules were not faithfully followed. There were also Kings, such as Seti-I, Ramses-II, Ramses-III and Ramses-IV, who are said to have been chosen as successor of the throne by their fathers in face of stronger claimants.

The tombs of the princes were not prominent or commensurate with their status, where as women (queens, princesses, concubines) of the King found place in royal pyramids and their tombs were distinct. Even the princes did not find place in the administrative texts of the Old Kingdom, may be they were not high in the administrative hierarchy. This according to a historian may have "contributed to the stability of government during the sensitive moment of succession."

The power and authority of the divine office of the Pharaohs were at times contested by the powerful provincial governors and officers. The fall of the Old Dynasty was caused largely by the great chiefs or prefects of the southern provinces. Similarly the power of the Theban priests and the generals of the southern military proved to be the bane of the New Kingdom. The social costs of such royal crisis and how did the royal crisis affect the common people of Egypt is not known.

The king was not only an agent of the god to 'herd' the Egyptians. He was also the chief arbitrator of justice and keeper of the maat or order. His chief consultant and advisor was the vizier or the prime minister. The continuity of this office under successive kings for long periods made them quite powerful. The organization of production and generation of revenue, maintenance of law and order were the concerns of the prince or the priests of the temples. This is elicited from the list of titles and genealogies. One prince, Nefer-Seshem-Shesat, of the 5th dynasty, was the vizier and the overseer of the Kings works. Another prince is referred to as the overseer of the works of the king and a commander of an army. There were titles of officials such as, 'the elder of the portal,' from which it is difficult to know the duties of the official.

8.2.5 Organization of Government and Society

All the title holding official were not necessarily princes or of the royal household. But all of them were literate or scribes. The papyrus or the flexible writing medium made out of the tree of the same name was a unique contribution of the Egyptians to human civilization. There were scribal schools, which under strict discipline trained people in the art of writing. This knowledge of writing was essential for any office in the Pharaonic Egypt. And the officialdom was a caste in itself enjoying not only power but also luxury, which were denied to the

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

illiterate peasants of their society. Architects, engineers, military commanders, religious ritualists, accountants all were scribes. These scribes had exhibited a remarkable skill in administrative and accounting jobs. The texts they have left behind along with other scholarly works speak volumes about how systematic and well organized was the Pharaonic state. We also get details, of the organization of the provincial government, the various types of priests and their duties, the working of the arable land, mines, river transport, granaries, rituals, justice etc. by the royal officials and the priests.

Their luxury as evidenced by the findings in the Pyramids, speaks volumes about it. The administration was organized very efficiently. The entire kingdom was divided into *nomes* and there was a hierarchy of officials to look after the nomes who were mostly from the royal families. The hierarchy of priests is also indicated. The *tjaty* (vizier) was the prime minister and the sole advisor of the Pharao.

The main resource of work and labour were the people from lower strata. The wheel was not used by them. Therefore they used to drag heavy loads, for building and other purposes, on the slush and mud after floods. Both high flood and low flood were harnessed for agriculture. Because of the fertility of the flood plains one crop in a year was sufficient to leave plenty of surplus to be used in the building of gigantic structures as well as the running of the institutions such as the temples and kingship and scribes. After the agricultural operations labour was available for other activities.

The absence of wheel was no deterrent to transport system. The Egyptians had developed a network of waterways and built boats of varying sizes and tonnage. Agricultural products and food-grains were transported to granaries and markets from the fields mainly through this transport network.

8.3 WEST AFRICA

According to available archeological evidences, West Africa, as other regions of Africa, was dotted with human settlements of Stone Age and Iron Age civilizations,. From 11th century onwards, we have, along with archeological evidence, the writings of Arab geographers and scholars about West Africa. And it is about this period, that is, from the 11th to 16th century A.D. (when Europeans start arriving) which we mainly discuss in this section. West Africa generally speaking, consists of the area between the western borders of modern Mauritania to the eastern borders of modern Nigeria.

8.3.1 Background

Before the Arab influence came, there were a few monarchical states in this region. Important of these were Kawkaw (which was perhaps the nucleus of the later Songhai kingdom of Gao), Malel (to the South of Ghana and which became later on the Mande kingdom of Mali) besides Ghana (not the present day Ghana but far removed from it towards the West) in the west and Kanem in the east near lake Chad.

These kingdoms may appear small in terms of geographical area as compared to later ones, yet these were developed state systems with established towns and cities. They also had extensive networks of markets and trade centres which were supported by developed agricultural hinterland. There is archeological evidence of evolution of a cattle-herding and settled agricultural economy among a mixed population of Libyan Berber and African 'black' agricultural population in the Sahara by at least 4000 B.C., which is when the Nile Valley civilization was taking similar shape. By 2000 B.C., when Sahara desiccated and took its present form as a desert, there was out-flowing of population. In the process, it appears, the 'blacks' concentrated in the Savannahs south of Sahara. Through conflicts over land, water rights, and exploitation and control of agricultural surpluses in the extremely fertile land of Nile Valley, the pharaohs built dramatic kingships and spectacular civilizations. At around the same time less spectacular monarchies evolved here in the savannahs of West Africa. In fact, the major West African monarchies developed not in the river valleys of Senegal and Niger or around lake Chad, rather in between them and the edges of south Sahara. Trans-Saharan trade which was carried through this region was the mainstay of these monarchies and determined their size and nature considerably. The West African communities had gold, ivory, and other agricultural commodities to offer in return for salt, which was scarce and was essential. Salt was not available except in the coastal region. They also had plenty of iron, which they had been working, in some instances, since 500 B.C. In return of iron they collected copper, other metals and Arab horses. They also could offer slaves.

This trans-Saharan trade could be older than the desert. Some surviving rock engravings in Sahara indicate existence of horse-drawn chariots and horses, the former for raids and the later for long distance trade. The engravings also indicate a line of communication from Fezzan and South Morocco to the valleys of Senegal and Niger, attesting an interest of the northerners in the alluvial gold of those river valleys. The control of this trade and the trade routes/trade centres had gone into the making of the powerful ancient kingdom of Ghana in West Africa. The "Hamitic hypotheses" which proposed that the development (of political institutions and others) among the 'blacks' was the result of infiltration of the Hamitic speaking Berbers (who were nomad pastoralists) from Libya, does not stand any scrutiny. First of all, not all infiltration was by Hamitic people. There were 'black' dynasties also as the Kanems. That there was infiltration, is not disputed. But the infiltrators, wherever they succeeded was due to the assimilation into existing societies and culture and appropriation of existing political institutions.

8.3.2 Some Major Monarchies of West Africa

Ghana was a powerful kingdom. According to archaeologists the description of its capital by the Corbodan geographer Abu Ubayd al-Bakr, may be that of Kumbi Saleh of southern Mauritania. Kumi Saleh was divided into two distinct parts. One part was built in the local African style with round mud houses and a walled one as the palace of the king. The other part of the city had houses built of stone and had a few mosques. The quarter perhaps was for the merchants of the North. The city was spread over more than two square kilometers and the adjacent cemeteries were also quite extensive. The two parts of the city were linked and had other residential settlements. Al-Bakr described that the king was ruling as a divine representative on earth. It was the King or the heir apparent, who could put on sewn clothes besides other ritual apparels, turbans, necklaces and bracelets. Common men, who appeared before the King, used to prostrate before him with their heads powdered with soil. This tradition continued for a very long time and was found during the Mali Empire too. The

King was succeeded by his sister's son, and on death was buried under a large mound of earth along with the bodies of a number of his retainers. His army was large, which enforced subordination of his vassal kings. Archeological artifacts indicate its relation with North Africa and the long-distance trade of the city's inhabitants. The prosperity of ancient Ghana depended on this trade which was conducted chiefly in gold from south and salt from Sahara and other manufactured commodities and copper from North Africa. The King used to control and tax this trade. The majority of the people of kingdom of Ghana were probably of northern Mande stock.

During the 10th century the monarchs of Ghana extended their domination over the Sanhajah, a conglomeration of Berber pastoralist tribes around Audaghost. The Sanhajah were suppliers of salt and North African goods to the Ghanaians. This domination not only upset the economic balance between the agricultural Ghana and the pastoralist Sanhajah, but also unleashed a process of counter-domination by the Sanhajahs. The Sanhajah tribes were partially Islamized people like the Berbers, and soon became part of a militant and puritanical Islamic movement known as the Almoravid. This helped them settle differences between tribes and unite to expand their domination over the productive lands of nearby areas. By the end of 11th century they had complete domination over the ancient Kingdom of Ghana. Thus started the Almoravid rule of Ghana. The indigenous rulers and traders were converted to Islam. The rulers, in spite of the conversion, continued with their ancestral rites and land cults, with the explicit purpose of not getting rejected by the subjects who were not Muslims.

But by the beginning of the 13th century, the depredations of the Almoravids and their internecine fights led to the undermining of the agricultural economy and power of Ghana. And now the Mande speaking communities towards the south, who were till now the vassals of Ghana, raised their head against their domination.. In 1235 A.D., Suniata, the Mande speaking Keita King of Mali, in the well-irrigated and fertile lands of the uppermost Niger valley came to incorporate Ghana in his territory. Gold was found abundantly in his land. The Keita clan had the singular objective of extending their power along the Niger bend towards Timbuktu and Gao, which were two major centres of the gold trade with North. But the power struggle within the Almoravids of Ghana, which led to the rise of the Keitas, also had dislocating impact on the trade routes towards the North. Because of this impact the northern terminus of the trade routes were no more within south Morocco but shifted towards Ifriqyah (i.e., Tunisia and eastern Algeria). So the river Niger was becoming more important for trade with the North than Bambuk or other cities as the southern centres of the same trade as a shorter route. By the 14th century the Dyula (Dioula) Mande merchants were going for trade as far east as Hausa (a city- state). The success of the Mali kingdom and the Mande merchants depended on their control over the Niger water-ways. And in this struggle for control the Mali Kingdom became weak. By the 15th century Songhai community, a non- Mande community, who were fishing and canoeing in the middle Niger, started laying a claim to the control of the waterways. They were also vassal of the Mali kingdom. In late 15th century, King/Sultan Sonni Ali, a Songhai, established his supremacy over the Mali kingdom and made Gao the Capital of the Songhai kingdom. And since then the hegemony of the Songhai continued for sometime in West Africa. This enlarged Songhai kingdom, however, was short-lived. In real terms it could not establish its hegemony over the multiple monarchies/states in the west in the tradition of the Ghana and Mali kingdoms. Sultan Ali could extend the Songhai rule eastwards through Hausaland and northwards to Air. In the east, there was the Kingdom of Kanem, whose rulers had been converted to Islam in the 11th century, and by the 14-15th century the kingdom declined in its power and influence over the resources, people and the trade. This decline was due to the infighting of its ruling elite, though it could somewhat revive in the former province of Bornu.

By the 16th century the Songhais had extended their influence over Kanem in the east and also upto the salt mines of Taghza, close to the Moroccan borders in the north. This provoked an invasion of the Songhai land by the Sadi dynasty of Morocco in 1591. The Moroccans came with firearms and 4000 soldiers, took Gao and Timbuktu and collected plenty of booty. But they had no means of retaining and administering the lands they conquered. By the end of 16th century, one Idris Alawma of Bornu, revived the Kanem-Bornu state again for a short period of time, which was followed by the control of much smaller Hausa kingdoms as Kano & Kastina. By the 16th century, the Europeans had also started settling for gold and slaves. The history of West Africa, before the arrival of Europeans was dominated by the ascendancy of the Falunas.

8.3.3 Society, Economy and Polity

The information about the society and economy during the Ghana, the Mali and the Songhai regimes in West Africa is quite sketchy. New researches and archeological findings are adding to the information everyday.

The Ghana kingdom had its agricultural production, which was not only sufficient to feed the entire kingdom but also helped in the consolidation of the Kingdom. Yet, the Ghana kingdom derived its economic power by imposing tax on the Saharan trade. From the north salt was passed to the south and from the south gold and copper were in demand. This seemed to have continued till the Songhays regime. The king was a divine figure under the Ghanas. The different ethnic groups and clans were following their customs. During the heyday of the Mali empire of the Mande or Mandigo ruler of the Keita tribe, who were partly Islamized by the 12th century, the society was of matrilineal families, as the children belonged to the mothers lineage. A few families, which claimed common ancestry constituted a village. The traditional village chiefs – called dugu-tigi – were the first and the smallest administrative unit of the empire. Above this, were the clan units with their chiefs. Some of the clans together constituted the province under a provincial governor called the farin. Provinces, largely organized as ethnic groups, were allowed to retain many of their local and indigenous systems of law and faith under the regime of the mansas or the Mali emporers/kings. This led to the strengthening of the empire as a federation of various ethnic tribes with their own beliefs, customs, 'laws', etc.

The commoners were basically the producers for the empire. They were engaged in agriculture, animal-rearing, fishing, mining and worked as craftsmen for non agricultural production. During the Mansa rule, crafts were made hereditary and specialization was encouraged. Though the Mali Empire was known for its gold, the economy was sustained by the agriculture and many nobles were also engaged in it. Millet, beans and rice were the chief crops of the western provinces of Mali, which were watered by rivers and also rain. Hunting was also closely associated with agriculture. Ths Somono of the upper Niger, the Bozo of the middle Niger, and the Sorko in the neighbourhood of Timbuktu were clans that specialized in fishing and exported smoked and dried fish to the entire empire. The Mabo clan similarly specialized in weaving and dyeing. The Siaki clan worked the gold. Plenty of gold and copper were exported by the Mali Empire and its imports included salt and kola-nuts. The dioula and the wangaras were the traders who used to carry these items in caravans of donkeys and other drought animals.

During the Songhay ascendancy the scenario seems to have continued as it was in the Mali Empire. There is no indication of any revolutionary change in terms of technology or governance entailing consequent changes in taxation and subjugation of the primary producers of the society. Peasants lived in hamlets near their lands and cultivated it extensively. Rural population was dense. They produced rice, millets and beans and many other vegetables, again an indication of similar crops as in the earlier regimes. Fishermen as other crafts men also, were partly fishermen and partly peasants, tilling their own lands. The division of such labour was seasonal.

Towns were also quite populated and housed not only nobles/aristocrats who took care of government, army and priesthood, but craftsmen also. Various smiths were living in towns, which were chiefly trade centres. The traders were mostly foreigners, and they gave a cosmopolitan character to the towns. The chief towns during the Songhay were, Timbuktu, Gao, Jenne. The aristocracy had a luxurious life, which is attested by their big houses and the garments they used. The presence of numerous courtesans is indicative of the luxurious lifestyle of the aristocrats and the moral laxity prevalent in the upper echelons of the society. Slaves, captured during war and by other means, were a labour reserve for all the West African regimes.

8.4 SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a modern nation state, which is of recent origin in comparison to the long history of human civilization it had had. It is hemmed in the north by Botswana and Namibia and surrounded by sea on other sides.

8.4.1 Mapping the Communities

We have evidence to suggest that human settlement existed in the southern region even before the beginning of Christian Era. The evidences of their existence suggest that they were largely hunter-gatherers, meaning they lived by hunting wild animals, fishing and gathering fruits and edible plants. These communities were called ‘Bushmen’ by the European colonizers of Africa, when they came in this region in the 17th century.

Thereafter, it sounds historically plausible, that pastoralists arrived on the historical scene of South Africa. Whether some of the hunting-gathering communities, (under certain outside influence or its internal dynamics, or otherwise), started domesticating sheep or cattle and became pastoralist, or there was immigration of pastoralists from the north, has not been conclusively established. These pastoralists were called ‘Hottentots’ by the European colonizers.

Thereafter, probably, arrived the mixed-farmer or part pastoralists and part settled farmers. These mixed farmers used iron (for making digging sticks), made pottery and were settled in villages for reasonably long period of time. These were called the ‘Kaffirs’ by the Europeans. Though we have placed hunter-gatherers, pastoralists and mixed farmers chronologically one after the other, they may have existed simultaneously (as they were noticed by the European colonizers in the 18th and 19th centuries) for a very long period of time.

The communities were differentiated ethno-linguistically also, as San (who were the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape, west of Algoa Bay) and were largely hunter-gatherers, then Khoikhoi towards a little north of the Sans, who were largely pastoralists, and Nguni, the mixed-farmers, (who inhabited the narrow coastal plain between the Drakensberg mountains and the sea) and Sotho-Tswana (the inhabitants of the high veld) etc. The Nguni language is further differentiated into Zulu, spoken in the north, and Xhosa, spoken in the south, and the communities named after the dialects, (both mutually intelligible). The languages of the high veld, Sotho, Tswana and Pedi, are more deeply differentiated than the Nguni languages.

The Khoikhoi were, it has been said, pastoralists and the San were hunter-gatherers. However, it seems that when some pastoralists lost their herds, either due to some cattle epidemic or to some rival tribe in a conflict, they again took to hunting and gathering. In due course when some of them managed, largely through banditry, to capture some herds, they resumed the practice of pastoralists. It has been observed that there were San in northern Namibia also, who were settled in villages and possessed copper mines unlike other Sans.

Similarly the southern Bantu speakers as the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana could move from one community into another and were assimilated into the new culture and adopted the new language. Therefore, it is very difficult to classify the people into exclusive communities as hunter-gatherers/ pastoralists and settled mixed-agriculturists or Ngunis/ Sans.

8.4.2 Economy

The mixed-farming was the most productive economy, it was more productive than both the pastoralists and the hunter-gatherers. The mixed-farming practices included not only agriculture and metallurgy, but also a degree of pastoralism (cattle-rearing) as well as some amount of hunting and gathering (supplementary food from the abundant game available and collecting indigenous plant and plant products). The mixed-farmers, therefore, had a stable and richer supply of food than the hunters or the pastoralists, and had communities of denser population that created political units of chiefdoms.

The Bantu speakers,(i.e., the Nguni, Xhosaand Zulu speakers), had harnessed the surface deposits of magnetite. They used to smelt it and by re-heating and hammering shape it as spear-heads, hatchets and hoes. It was a major trade item also. They also had the skill to use the copper deposits found in northern Botswana and northern Transvaal, which was used to make hair ornaments, earrings, necklaces, bells, anklets and crowns.

Cattle overwhelmingly formed the mainstay of the economy of the Southern Bantu societies. Cows had entered the idiom and proverbs and songs, common in the South Bantu societies, as for example, “Cattle are bank of a Mosotho.” In Mpondo, there were more than fifty different terms for describing the cattle and at least five different terms to describe the horns. Historian Elizabeth Isichei writes, “Wealth could be stored in the form of herds, which offered a certain measure of protection against famine. But above all, cattle were valued as a medium of exchange, needed to obtain wives and through them children: 'Cattle beget children.' The ownership of cattle led to an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and may also have contributed to an increasing polarization of gender roles which some find reflected in the ruins of fifteenth century Zimbabwe. The bride-wealth (*bogadi* in Sesotho and Setswana, *labola* in the Nguni languages) could only be made in cattle. A fortunate Khoikhoi elite herder could acquire a large number of cattle and sheep by which he could have many wives. He could also help his sons with them as well as 'buy' clients and become political leader or ruler. Khoikhoi society was thus a plutocracy. The ruler's authority depended on his wealth, if his wealth diminished or lost to his enemy, his authority also collapsed. But usually, the ruler's authority was quite stable till the advent of the colonial powers.

Gradually over centuries agro-pastoralism came to be practised by the Bantu communities in the entire eastern half of South Africa and northern Namibia,. The agro-pastoralists cleared the bushes and turned areas into cultivable land, and thus contributed further by restricting the deadly tsetse fly, which posed a threat to both human beings and cattle.

A very sharp division of labour between the sexes characterized the agro-pastoralist society. The men were responsible for the livestock. Herding was their main pre-occupation. This, of course, did not require much involvement as the younger boys were deputized to do that during the times of peace. The boys also used to tend the cattle at the early age of ten years or so . They, also from a very tender age, used to get trained in milking the cows, thickening and souring the milk into *amasi*, butchering animals, and working the leather from the animal skin for different uses, all of which were the domain of the men. Men also used to build byres, *kraals* for the cattle with poles and brushwood.

Smithing was another exclusive vocation of the men. In eastern Transvaal region copper and iron were found abundantly and were processed by the local men who had been following it for hundreds of years. In the Olifants river drainage system some men specialized in manufacture of salts from the crusts formed by the seepage from saline springs. These regions traded with other regions where such goods were not available. The South African villages were not self sufficient as had been suggested by many a European visitors to the place. The Xhosa chiefdoms used to exchange cattle for copper and iron goods, and the Ngunis were linked with others in a similar way. Hunter-gatherers also exchanged cooper goods or ornaments with agro-pastoralists for meat and cattle. Metal goods were prized by the populace. In 1689, a Dutch traveller reported that a traveller with metal goods was never safe there. So far no evidence of any market place has been found, which suggests that there was only relay trade between various communities inhabiting different places. The people of South Africa possibly did not use any oxen for transport, and the exchanges were barter exchange. Trading too was the occupation of men.

Zulu men, it has been said, used to 'build huts, keep them in repair, erect and renew various fences, ... to hew the bush,.. ..from such spots as the females are to cultivate; to milk cows and generally tend all stock… Many elder men.. (were).. constantly engaged with special offices.. .. doctoring, divining, metal — working, wood-carving, basket-making etc.' War, politics and all public affairs was the job of men.

In 1635, it was reported of some South African community that the women do all the work such as planting, tilling the earth with a stick etc. A large number of Europeans have mentioned that women were over-burdened with manual chores. The women used to take care of the entire agricultural operations after the land was cleared by men.

Clearing of the land had to be done periodically as they were practising swidden agriculture, that is, they cultivated a field for some years and then allowed it to lie fallow for some time and shifted to some other field. They grew several varieties of millets, pumpkins, watermelons and calabashes, a type of tobacco. At some places they grew beans and yams. Maize was introduced into South Africa during the 18th century.

After the men cleared the field, it was the task of the women to take over. Women did the hoeing, planting, weeding, harvesting and thrashing. Women also had to look after the young and the household chores as preparing the staple food and the cleaning of utensils, fetching water and firewood wherever necessary. The house built by men was plastered by women with cowdung and was also kept clean. Girls from an early age were supposed to help their mothers and in the process learn how to cook food and to work in the field. The work of the women was certainly more arduous and continuous than that of men. They were excluded from public affairs and were subordinate to men. Some women expressed their resentment against this state by running away from their husbands and other similar acts, which have been recorded in the 18th century.

8.4.3 The Bride Wealth

The bride-wealth was a unique institution in the South African Bantu speaking society. A woman moved from her parental house to that of her in-laws after marriage. She was supposed to shoulder the responsibility of agricultural production, food preparation, up-keep of the house and giving birth and rearing up children. To compensate for this loss of source of labour and responsibility of procreation, the husband used to give a bride-wealth to the family of the wife. This normally used to be in the form of cattle. In case of divorce, (which may not have been very common), the bride-wealth was to be returned but only when the woman had begotten any child. Before she gave birth to a child, she was allowed to have milk at her house. But if she was unable to bear children, then she had a tougher life.

Possession of more cattle enhanced the ability to pay bride wealth and procure more (than one) wives which was the case with clan chiefs and other privileged elites. Bride's parents were willing to give their daughters to men of substance or the chiefs, so that they may get good bride-wealth. The chiefs, in their turn, used the labour of their many wives to give feasts and seal his authority (Collective feast were given to ensure elite status of the patron.) When the children reached puberty, they were initiated into adulthood. The initiation ceremonies were quite elaborate. The elderly exercised certain control over the young through this.

8.4.4 Organization of Government

The people south of Limpopo had distinct political institutions and identities. Most of the communities had 'kings' or chiefs. They had all the characteristics of kingdoms. The sizes of these kingdoms or 'principalities' (as Historian Elizabeth Isichei would prefer to call them), varried. Nguni principalities were dispersed and smaller, apparently because water was available in plenty and the types of pastures (the sweet and the sour veld) were found close to each other. The states of southern Sotho were also smaller and were largely on fertile river valleys as the Caledon. The chief settlement of the Thalping (southern Tswana), it was reported in 1801, was 'as large in circumference as the Cape Town'.

The chief of these clans/communities/states were supposed to bring in good rain, which would ensure good harvest. In case of a drought the authority of the chief was challenged and his people did desert him along with their cattle. Deserting the chief could also happen during a disputed succession. The office of the chief was mostly hereditary, yet a few could acquire chiefdom by laying a claim to some chiefly lineage. Joining of new followers or desertions could make a clan small or big. About the fusion and fission of the units of polities Elizabeth Isichei says, "the conquest of a hero, the ambition of rival princely brothers" were some reason, "but it is likely that the underlying causes were often ecological, the pressure of a growing population and expanding herds on the resources." Amongst the Xhosa, it was mandatory for the brother and the son of the chief to leave the homestead of the father. There were Sotho-Tswana traditions describing the separation of two chiefly lineages from 1500 A.D. Intermarriage between chiefly families was another reason of fusion of smaller polities into big ones. The cattle resources could help establish new chieftaincies. Some chieftaincies attracted groups of followers and had combined totem as the Rolong.

Generally speaking though, at least until the mid-eighteenth century, the political units south of river Limpopo, were small, particularly in KwaZulu- Natal and Mpumalanga. In the Eastern Cape and on the high Veld, the principalities or kingdoms were large and had a hierarchy of confederate chiefs.

Towards the 16th century the arrival of the colonial powers changed the entire situation for the people of the southern part of Africa as in other regions of Africa.

8.5 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have had a glimpse of the history of Africa. Here we have not discussed each and every community and kingdom/State separately. We studied it in three sections covering a few regions of the North Africa, West Africa and South Africa. You must have also noticed that we did not select any one specific period to study all the three regions. One obvious reason for such a selection is the absence of detailed information about the whole of Africa in a chronological order for all its regions. Another reason for not going into details is the limitation of space available in this course (which plans to cover ancient and medieval societies in all regions of the world)

In North Africa the Egypt was the dominant civilization which dates back to more than 3000 years before the Christ. In Egypt the kingship was considered as divine which was also inherited. Yet dynastic changes were also regular. Religion played important role in the society. The script and writing were well developed and scribes were held in high esteem. The region was very fertile and yielded lots of surplus.

In West Africa we notice developed state system with established towns and cities. You were familiarized with some major monarchies of the region.

Agriculture was the main occupation and generated sufficient surplus. A few crafts were also practised. The society was matrilineal.

The region of South Africa was inhabited by different communities. A few of these communities were fully pastoralists while some were involved in farming. In pastoral communities the ownership of cattle decided the social and political hierarchy. These communities were mainly patrilineal with women having a subordinate role. The colonization of Africa in the 19th century completely altered the economy, polity and society of various regions.

8.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss kingship, organization of government and society in North Africa.

2) What were the major monarchies of West Africa?

3) Explain society, economy and polity in West Africa.

4) Discuss in brief the Economy of the region of South Africa.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 9 NOMADIC EMPIRES

Structure

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Nomads, Empires, Some Issues

9.3 Geographic Settings

9.4 Nomadic Migrations

9.5 Chronology of the Empires

9.6 Understanding the Empires

9.7 Summary

9.8 Exercises

9.1 INTRODUCTION

You have studied about Early Human Societies, Bronze Age Civilization and Formation of States and Empires. This pattern of development did not take place in all ancient societies in a similar fashion. This was confined to select regions in varying chronological periods and was specific to those regions. There were a number of factors at each stage which gave rise to such a pattern of development. The geographic and environmental factors, availability of resources and changes in tools and techniques shaped the nature of transformation in each of these societies. These changes are specific to societies which were leading a settled life also termed as sedentary societies.

However, parallel to this pattern of development a large number of societies were flourishing which were at various stages of development if one uses the term ‘development’ in the context one uses for growth of sedentary societies. Many of these did not adopt settled agriculture and were following nomadic way of life. They were not confined to small pockets only. They were quite widespread in all regions with large numbers of such societies having substantial population. Here in Unit 9 our discussion will have altogether different perspective. We will study them as such societies which established nomadic Empires with well defined polity, society and economy and their interaction with sedentary civilizations down to the middle ages.

The interaction of nomadic and semi-nomadic societies with sedentary civilizations is a theme which has had frequent debates in history. Here we will be analyzing the nature of the nomadic empires in Central Asia as well as Europe. Though Herodotus as far back as fifth century BC had raised the question as to why we distinguish between Europe and Asia when geographically and historically there is one continent of Eurasia. Other similar queries could be; how much of present day China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, or even European Hungary, etc. were effectively working parts of Central Asia during what times of their history? Speaking of Europe, what about the Magyars, Bulgars, Turks and others who migrated as recently as in medieval times; or Dorians, Hittites, and many other peoples who populated Greece and the Levant in classical and ancient times? To understand the concepts clearly this unit is divided into five sections. In the first section, we will be dealing with the concepts such as 'Nomadism', 'Empire' and 'Nomadic empires'. In the second section we will look at the setting in which this great nomadic imperium unfolds in the historical context. Here we will define the region that we are discussing, and the patterns of migrations as we get them, before we move into the imperium. In the third section, we will discuss the chronology of this unfolding drama. In the subsequent sections we will look at some specificities of the nomadic empires, in relation with the outside world with their inner systems.

9.2 NOMADS, EMPIRES, SOME ISSUES

There is a difference between 'nomadism' and 'pastoral nomadism'. The former refers to movement of people who are not directly engaged in herd rearing and herd tending, while the latter is engaged in it. In the Indian context many such communities can be found today who are nomadic but not pastoral. Gaudiya Lohars for instance, who rework the iron and repair the iron implements is one such community which migrates from its base in Rajasthan and wanders from place to place in a rhythmic cycle practicing their profession of making iron implements.

In this section, we will be dealing with communities/people, groups who were pastoral nomadic, and played a major role in the creation of the empires on the Eurasian steppe. Pastoral Nomadism has been variously understood. A.M. Khazanov defines it as a 'food extracting economy where the entire community is dependent on its herds for the supply of food.' Dyson-Hudson suggest that pastoral nomads are those who choose as their basic strategy for providing year round food for their herds the movement of livestock to pasturage rather than bringing fodder to herds. The distance traversed by such movement, its duration, frequency and pattern may vary depending on many variables. This was not aimless wandering in search of grass and water, as the cliche of the Chinese sources would have it. The ecology of a given group's particular zone determined, to a considerable extent, the composition and size of its herds and the attendant human camping units (usually 8-12 family units). This is a form of economic production that appears to have developed out of sedentary animal husbandry among groups that practiced both agriculture and stockbreeding. Most pastoral nomadic societies of Eurasia continued to practice some form of at least vestigial agriculture. Distinct forms of social and political organization evolved or were brought into being in response to the demands of this type of economic activity and the nature of the interaction of the nomads with their sedentary neighbours.

Given this basic understanding, we need to broaden the concept if we are to understand the scale at which the empires on the steppe were conceived. Nomadism and its mirror image the sedentism are fuzzy areas, where they change given the understanding of the situation and context. We should understand nomads as a fairly frequent, seasonal movement of people with its economy based in pastoralism. Nomadism should be seen as a vibrant, rational response to the ecological, political and societal context that has economic dimension to it. It is this economic dimension that among other things leads to the massive steppe empires in the 'early' and 'middle' periods of history of the steppe. The history of the steppe is the history of the ebb and flow of its empires.

Before we get into the nuances of the steppe empires there is a need to understand the notion of the empire itself. Empires have been essentially understood as differents than the 'kingdoms'. They are often distinguished from Kingdoms for their structural sophistication. Because of their large landmass, empires needed to integrate both the various local cultures within the empire and the various key regions. To do this, they build roads across their territories and created a cultural superstructure to integrate its people. Rulers solidified their legitimacy by building impressive capitals and fielding impressive armies. Another striking similarity was their attitudes towards foreign states. The Roman *Imperator* (Emperor) was considered superior to the foreign *Reges*/ *Rex* (King). Persian rulers considered themselves King of Kings. The Chinese *Huang Di* was considered superior to foreign *Guo Wang*. The ruler of the Mongol Empire took the title Khan of Khans. An empire may be composed either: a) of subject territories under the sway of an individual ruler, with no one of these territories having control over the others, or b) of a metropolitan state together with the territories subordinate to it. The European overseas empires of the modern era were examples of the latter type, the Romanov and Habsburg empires of the former variety. This difference is on account of the nature of control, territoriality and the number of social and political systems it encompasses in the imperial system. As argued by Romila Thapar, empires have been understood as having three essential components. At the core of the empire is the 'metropolitan state', ringed around by the core regions, which are kingdoms in themselves. Then there are the peripheries, fuzzy boundaries that separate the cores or lie in between the cores. The metropolitan state exerts to establish control and ensure a flow of resources to it from the cores and the peripheries. The Mauryan Empire is good examples of this model for the early historic phase. Here the core of the empire was the state of Magadha, which encompassed in it various cores such as the Kalinga, Kaushambi and others to name a few.

The problem with these definitions is that it does not include a quantitative aspect of the imperial system. How much is considered a large enough territory? How sophisticated is sophisticated? And of course, we have "empires" that fit the category of power and territory very well, but fails in structure. This list would include Alexander the Great's Empire, Attila the Hun's empire, and Tamerlane's Empire. Thus perhaps these were not empires but large states; areas temporarily governed by Alexander or Attila the Hun? There are different ways to look at these issues. We can also look at it from the perspective of the world systems theory and what it can tell us in terms of the imperial integration of the steppe and the conflict with the littoral world. Although we should be aware that the world system theory primarily explains the modern capitalist world and its functions, yet it would be interesting to see the application of the same to the steppe empires of the past.

9.3 THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTINGS

The Eurasian continent is the largest landmass on the globe. Within this largest landmass we are concerned with the relationship of two distinct geographical regions, the Littoral states with access to the seas, and wealth accumulated from trade and agriculture and the Inner Continent of Eurasia, which was characterized by the pastoral land use pattern. Here in the littoral states resided the sedentary population, which enjoyed the fruits of agriculture and trade. The inner arc of the crescent of the Eurasian Continent follows the Arctic Ocean coastline of Scandinavia and the Siberia. The littoral states lie on the outer crescent of the

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

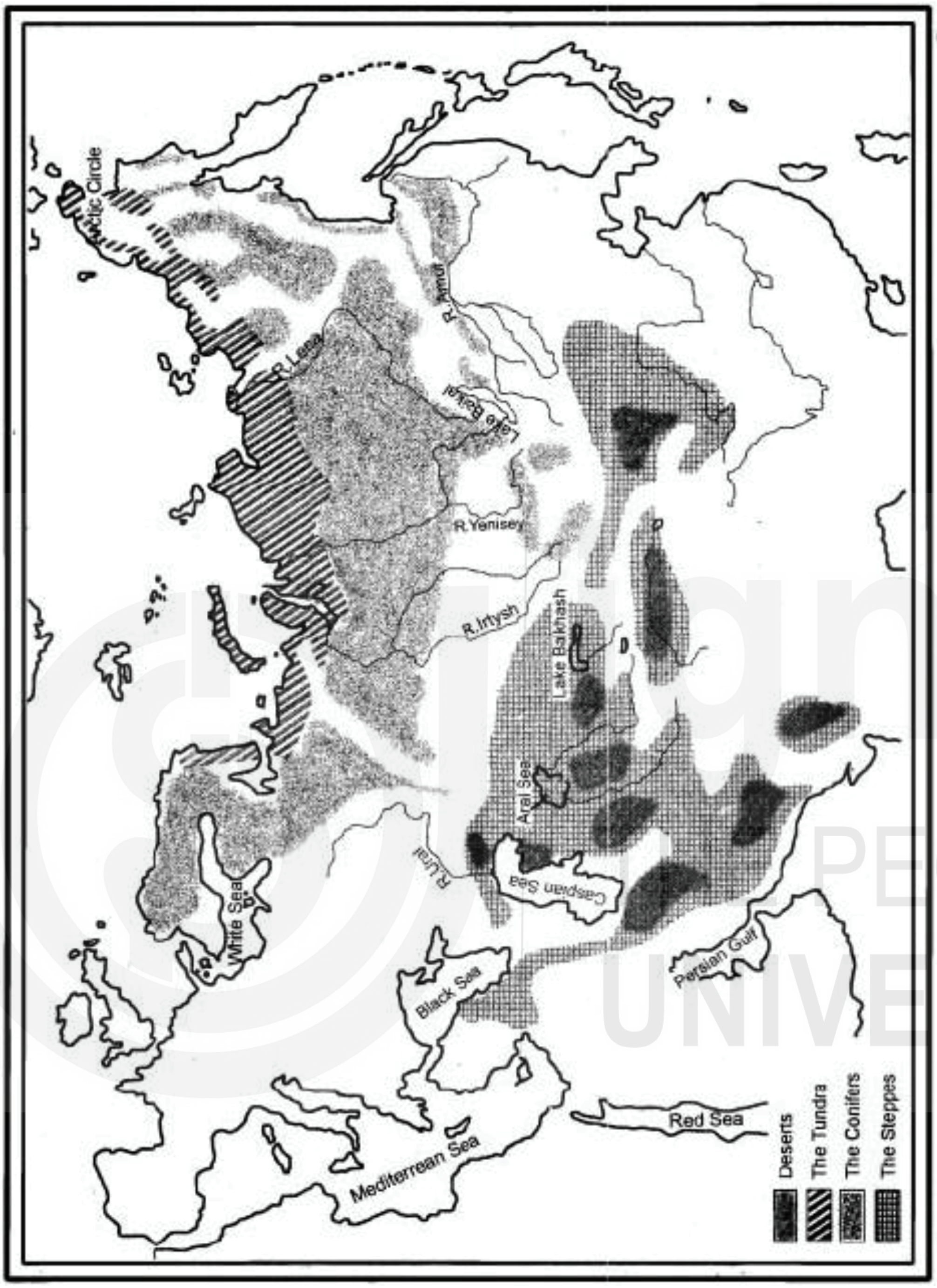
Eurasian continent. This outer arc of the crescent stretches from the west to the east and includes in itself the Europe, Asian Minor, Iran, the Indian Peninsula, the mainland countries of South East Asia, China and the Siberian seaboard. These littoral states find its mirror image in what has been characterized as the Heartland. Essentially the geographical features of the Heartland are simple. The Arctic Ocean marks the northern limits of the Heartland. The great massif of the Hindukush and the Himalayan Mountains form the southern limits of the Heartland. Between the Arctic and the Himalayas the rivers that do not merge in the navigable seas drain this enormous area. The topography of the Heartland is essentially simple. At its southern end is the Pamirs. The Heartland consists of four immense plains, the uplands of the central Siberia, the featureless plain of the western Siberia, the lonely and majestic Mongolian plateau and Gobi, at five thousand feet above the mean sea level.

It would be important to understand the major difference of the land use pattern that demarcates the Heartland from the Littoral states. Four layers of plants crisscross the Heartland. Along the far north stretches the Tundra, its expanses hidden beneath the long winter nights. South of the tundra lies the taiga, the immense stretch of green coniferous forest that starts from the Baltic and to the Pacific. The land is matted with the waste of the conifer waste and makes poor quality timber. The third belt, bright and green, lies further south of the taiga. This is the steppe, the sea of grass, rooted in rich humus soil increased in fertility through the centuries partly by the decay of the grass itself, and also due to the minerals found in the rock bed below. This band of grass stretches from the foot of the Carpethian mountains through the Urals and the Caspian to the Khingan range east of Mongolia. It also extends beyond the Carpethian in the Hungarian plains and beyond the Khingan range in the Manchurian lands. Thus the steppe not only cuts a massive scythe across the Heartland but into the Littoral states at both the ends of Eurasian landmass. The fourth belt is of the tiger strip deserts curving round the Heartland crescent and straddles the central Asia. Some of these deserts are the Kara Kum, the Kyzyl Kum and the Ust-Urt, bleak landscapes with harsh environments. Therefore also more than elsewhere, habitation was and still is often at a margin of subsistence, which is sensitive to minor changes in delicate ecological balances. Even small climactic and ecological changes can have large human consequences — and vice versa.

9.4 NOMADIC MIGRATIONS

Given the meagre rainfall in the area the land use pattern has been pastoralism. However there is one noticeable difference in the pastoralism practiced on the steppe and in other area. The steppe pastoralism was the mounted nomadic pastoralism. It was in essence a horse culture. It was migratory in nature, always on the lookout for better pastures and better grasslands for the herds. Marija Gimbutas records radiocarbon evidence of three major westward thrusts of migratory waves by steppe pastoralists in 4300-4200 BC, 3400-3200 BC and 3000-2800 BC. For more recent periods other secondary sources have also pointed out recurrent waves of migration emerging from Central Asia into all directions. However, the predominant direction was westward; perhaps, as Khazanov suggests because that is where the more fertile and richer regions were. Each of these waves was also about 200 years long and they occurred at interval of about 500 years. This has been attributed to recurrent migrations to a 640 year cycle of climactic change in Central Asia. Others dispute the same.

Gills and Frank suggest the existence of long cycles of approximately 200 year upswings and 200 year downswings in economic growth and hegemonic expansion, which we have tried to identify since 1700 BC.


Arctic Circle
R. Lena
R. Amur
Lake Baikal
R. Yenisey
R. Irtysh
Lake Bakhash
Aral Sea
R. Ural
Caspian Sea
White Sea
Black Sea
Persian Gulf
Red Sea
Mediterrean Sea
Deserts
The Tundra
The Conifers
The Steppes

Map: (Not to scale) Geographic Regions

Whatever the reasons for the migrations, perhaps by 1900 BC but certainly between 1700 and 1500 BC, Hittites and Kassites moved to Asia Minor; Aryans moved into India and Iran; and the Hurrians and Hyksos went to the Levant and Egypt. These and other migrations out of Central Asia affected not only each of the receiving regions and peoples. The consequences also altered the relations among these outlying peoples and regions themselves, as for instance those between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Another major migratory movement occurred around 1000 BC, from perhaps 1200 to 900 BC. Indo-Europeans moved eastward and perhaps became ancestors of the later Tocharians of the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang. Among others, Phoenicians, Arameans and Dorians moved into the Levant and Greece. They contributed to dramatic developments in Assyria, including Niniveh and Babylon, and later in Persia and Greece.

Around a half millennium before the birth of Christ, the movement of the Massagetae drove the Scythians westward, and they in turn pushed the Cimmerians west- and southward. The latter crossed the Caucasus and arrived in Asia Minor in 680-670 BC. Later, Herodotus recorded their incursions – and their supposedly exceptional savagery – for history. They were followed by the Sarmatians.

Around the beginning of the Christian era, migratory movements emerging from Central Asia contributed to far reaching changes. On China's "Inner Asian Frontier" the Ch'in and Han rulers fought off the Hsiung Nu in Zungaria across the Tien Shan Mountains. To do so, the Chinese tried to enlist the aid of the Yue Chi along the Kansu (Haxi) Corridor and Dunhuang. However, the Hsiung Nu defeated the Yue Chi, who migrated westward. It is still disputed whether the former became the Huns who later invaded Europe. However, the latter did conquer the Saka people and/or the Bactrian successors of Alexander the Great. Their descendants founded the Kushan Empire, which ruled the North of India. Parthians invaded Persia from the North to conquer the Selucids who had taken over there from Alexander.

Around 500 AD, new movements of peoples from Central Asia spread in all directions and had Domino effects. Ephtalites moved into India, Goths and Huns into Europe (Attila attacked Rome in 452). Tang China, Western and Eastern Byzantine Rome, Persia, and the later spread of Islam among others would not have become what they did without the impact of these migrants and invaders from Central Asia. Before 1000 AD, the Turks, who originated in the Altai near Mongolia, moved into Anatolia, which became Turkish and eventually Turkey. Perhaps the most memorable migratory and invasory movement was that of the Mongols under Genghis Khan and his successors to Tamerlane in the 13th and 14th centuries. The world's largest empire they created was only shortlived. But its consequences were very long lived and far reaching in the development of Ming China, Mogul India, Safavid Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and perhaps even through its effects on subsequent European development and expansion.

We need to understand the two basic features of the Eurasian steppe that have decisively influenced the nomadic empires. These are the primarily separate habitat for the nomads and sedentary population and the relatively higher density of the nomadic populations within the Heartland that sometimes facilitated its unification. Thus the sedentary population was on the rim of the Heartland and in the littoral states, while the nomads had the pastures to themselves. It was this clear-cut division borne out of ecological factors amongst other things that facilitated a different cultural context to both the Heartland and the Littoral States. The subjugation by the heartland of the Littoral States was then a necessity for the nomads to survive.

We must keep this aspect in mind as we turn to the state formation processes now that laid the foundation of the various nomadic empires on the steppe.

9.5 CHRONOLOGY OF THE EMPIRES

From 9,000 to 5,000 BC the Neolithic Revolution expanded through Southwest Asia and Southern Europe, as well as into India and Northern China, producing settled farming and herding communities and a tremendous increase in population in these areas. By 4,000 BC, however, another sort of revolution in human economy had begun taking place in the vast grassland areas of Central Eurasia, the steppes that stretch from Southern Europe to North China. In what might be termed the "Pastoral Revolution," early farming communities on the East European steppes domesticated the horse and, as their land became drier and less suitable for farming, they came to rely almost exclusively on their herds of cattle, goats and sheep. Over the next 1,500 years these people gradually abandoned sedentarism and developed a way of life involving nomadic migrations with their herds. After about 2400 BC, when the first nomadic invasions of Europe began, until the Mongols of the 13th and 14th centuries AD, the history of Europe and Asia was one of conflict between sedentary farmers and mobile, warlike steppe nomads. Three great peoples played the major role in Eurasian Pastoral Nomadism: Indo-Europeans, Turks, and Mongols. The following periods can be discerned in the alternating dominance of these three groups over the steppelands (dates may overlap, since certain developments affected only part of the vast Eurasian steppe):

The Indo-European Period (4,000BC-300AD)

During this period, Indo-European speaking tribes developed a tough, mobile way of life which allowed them to spread from the coast of the Black Sea (in present-day Ukraine) to what is today the western region of China. During this time, the political centre of gravity flowed from West to East, with the most powerful tribes, such as the Iranian speaking Scythians, centred in Eastern Europe. However, some tribes such as the Iranian-speaking Sakas and Alans brought pastoral nomadism to non-Indo-European groups in northern Central Asia, notably the ancestors of the Turks, Mongols, and the Tungusic and Manchu-speaking tribes of present-day northwestern China. By late Roman times (4th century AD), the predominate movement of tribes on the steppes would be from Central and Northern Asia to China and westward to Europe and Iran.

The Hsiung-nu (Xiong-nu) Period (250BC-450AD)

Turkic-speaking tribes, some of whom later went westward and became the Huns, who, led by Attila, were the terror of Europe, probably led the first powerful steppe confederation in present-day Mongolia. The Xiong-nu repeatedly invaded Han China, who responded by extending its political influence along the Silk Route far into Central Asia. The eastern Hsiung-nu divided into northern and southern branches, the latter falling under the influence of Chinese culture.

In 155AD the Northern Hsiung-nu were destroyed and replaced by a people of Mongol stock, the Hsien-pi. Another Mongol-speaking group, the Ju-Juan whom the Chinese disparagingly called the Juan-Juan, a pun that means "unpleasantly wriggling vermin", replaced these, in turn in 402AD. While these Mongolian-speaking tribes controlled Mongolia, much of northern China continued to be ruled by the Hsiung-nu and other Turkic-speaking peoples.

The Turkic Kaganate (552-744)

In 552 the Mongol Ju-Juan was destroyed by the Turks, who were thought to be the direct descendants of the Hsiung-nu. The Avars, a part of the defeated Mongols, moved westward and invaded Europe in the 7th century. At its height the Turkic Kaganate (kagan, or khan, is the title of "king" among the Mongol and, later, among the Turkic tribes) covered most of Central Asia and northern China. During the 6th and 7th centuries, the Turks developed an alphabet and inscribed part of their history on stone stelae (the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions, often mistakenly described as written in "Turkic runes").

The Uighur Empire (744-840)

Their cousins, the Uighurs, who displaced the Turks in 744 set up their own Empire, centred in present-day Mongolia. The Uighur adopt Manichaeism (a religion originating in Persia from a mixture of Iranian Zoroastrianism and Christianity) and developed a vertical script based on an alphabet used in Persia (the old Sogdian script). This new Uighur alphabet supplanted the writing of the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions. The Uighurs were the allies of the Tang Chinese and absorbed many traits from their sedentary culture. In 840 the still nomadic Kirgiz (ancestors of the modern Kazakh) destroyed the Uighur Empire. Remnants of the Uighur fled their base in Mongolia and entered the present- day Xinjiang.

Steppe kingdoms in North China (840-1278)

As the Tang Dynasty moved toward collapse, a number of steppe peoples rose to dominance in northern China. They included the Mongol Khitan, the Tibetan Tanguts, and the Jurchens, ancestors of the Manchu. Meanwhile, on the steppes and forests of Mongolia, Chingiz (Genghis) Khan united all of the nomadic tribes, a process completed by 1206. The Mongols conquered all of the kingdoms of northern China. By 1278 Kubilai Khan conquered southern China, as well.

The Mongol World Empire (1206-1368)

Chingiz Khan united the Mongol and neighboring Turkic tribes by 1206. The Uighurs, who submitted peacefully, provided their vertical script as the first Mongol writing system. Mongol-Tatar (the Tatar were a Mongol group absorbed by Chingiz Khan's Mongols, but the name was then transferred to the many Turkic peoples who served as Mongol allies) armies conquered all of the steppes, as well as the sedentary civilizations of Russia (1240), Persia and Mesopotamia (1258), and southern China (1278). Mongol domination in Islamic Southwest Asia lasted until 1355, in China until 1368, and in Russia well into the 15th century.

Political Decline of the Steppe Peoples (14th century to present)

As Mongol rule was overthrown, the sedentary peoples (especially the Russians and Chinese) rebuilt their political power and gradually encroached on the peoples of the steppes. Many pockets of Turkic-speaking peoples (and a few Mongol ones) were left behind from Europe to Mongolia as the Russians advanced eastward. Some of these Turkic speakers retained the old Mongol ethnonym Tatar, corrupted by Europeans into the word "Tartar." The spread of Russian and Chinese political influence climaxed in the 18th to 20th centuries, when all of the steppe peoples were incorporated into either the Russian or Chinese

Empires. Today, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, new countries have sprung up in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan), and (Outer) Mongolia has become truly independent of both Russian and Chinese domination for the first time in centuries.

9.6 UNDERSTANDING THE EMPIRES

The central thesis of Anatoli Khazanov's (l979) Nomads and the Outside World is that "nomads could never exist on their own without the outside world and its non-nomadic societies" and that "the important phenomenon of nomadism ... consists in its indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world" (Khazanov l979: 3). The same relationship extends to the formation of the state among the nomads — and perhaps among their sedentary neighbors also. Khazanov links state formation among nomads mostly but not always with external expansion at the expense of their sedentary neighbors. He distinguishes between conquest and subjugation of sedentary peoples, from whom the nomads exact tribute, and sedentarization of the nomads themselves on their neighbors' territory. In either case, state formation is an important instrument for the nomads. Sometimes also, a nomad state may be formed to derive tribute from a sedentary one to which it offers protection from other nomads.

Thomas Barfield goes one step further. In his analysis of *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*, Barfield criticizes the "common assumption that the creation of a nomadic state was the result of internal development. Yet historically known nomadic states were organized on a level of complexity far beyond the needs of simple nomadic pastoralism. The development of the state among nomadic pastoralists, therefore, was not a response to internal needs; rather it developed when they were forced to deal with more highly organized sedentary state societies on a continual basis. Drawing on cases from southwestern Asia, Irons [l979] came to the same conclusion and reduced it to a hypothesis: "Among pastoral nomadic societies hierarchical political institutions are generated only by external relations with state societies and never develop purely as a result of internal dynamics of such societies" (Barfield 1989:6-7)."

Barfield devotes much of his book to confirming this hypothesis for Eastern Central Asia. He extends it by showing that "Powerful nomadic empires rose and fell in tandem with native dynasties in China. The Han and Hsiung-nu empires appeared within a decade of one another, while the empire of the Turks emerged just as China reunified under the Sui/Tang dynasties (ibid. p. 9) The unification of China under the Ch'in/Han dynasties and the steppe under the Hsiung-nu after centuries of anarchy occurred within a single generation. Three hundred years later, dissolution of central power in both China and the steppe also took place within a generation. It was no accident that the steppe and China tended to be mirror images of one another. Ultimately the state organization of the steppe needed stable China to exploit. The Turkish empires and the T'ang dynasty provide an unusual opportunity to test this hypothesis" ibid. p. 131)."

Nomadism, as we have noted, is a system that must interact with other economies. Pastoral production is capable of creating great individual wealth, but it cannot generate the great quantity and variety of foodstuffs that sedentary society does. Hence, it cannot support as large a population. Although sedentary and nomad alike faced the uncertainties of nature and man, nomadism was by far the more precarious system. A disturbance caused by epizootics, pastoral overproduction or raids could have far-reaching consequences in the steppe, bringing about the migration of tribes in search of new pasturage or the assaults of half-starved raiding parties on agrarian communities. In short, it resulted in war and conquest. Nomadism was merciless to those who could not maintain the minimum herd necessary for survival (usually 60-100 head of sheep, horses, cattle, goats and camels with sheep and horses predominant). Those who could not find relatives willing or able to help them rebuild or even to hire them as herders were often forced to sedentarize. Such nomads became willing members of predatory bands that raided nomad and sedentary alike. Desperate men formed the nucleus of the such rebellious groups that future conquerors gathered. The nomad with his highly developed equestrian skills was a redoubtable and feared warrior. These skills were exploited by both nomadic and sedentary societies. Some nomadic groups or individuals took service with surrounding sedentary states as allies (often marital alliances were part of this relationship), mercenaries or slave-soldiers (the gulams and mamluks of the Muslim world). Whatever the term or relationship, each of the sedentary states ringing the Eurasian steppes, had such units.

Conflict with sedentary society came largely over access to the goods of agrarian and urban production. Nomads traded or raided for these goods, adopting whichever strategy suited their capabilities of the moment. In essence, the militarily stronger of the two parties determined what form this exchange would take. Powerful empires, like China, whose posture towards the nomads was usually defensive, often used the prospect of trade as a means of control. Such contact and conflict could provide the impetus for nomadic state building. Successful raiding was also a means by which the nomadic chieftain was able to strengthen his position, providing booty to be distributed to his followers and enhancing his charisma as warlord and diplomat.

The formation of nomadic states is still not fully understood, largely because we have few documents coming from within the nomadic world that describe the goals of the state-builders. Given their tribal organization, continual training for war and the executive talents needed to move herds and people some distance, the state was latent in most Eurasian nomadic polities. It could be brought to the fore by internal pressures, stemming, perhaps, from fights over pasturage or access to goods. Even here, however, it is possible that the causes originated outside nomadic society. In these struggles, nomad was pitted against nomad, the victor either driving off the vanquished (who might, then, suddenly burst into a neighboring sedentary state incapable of fending them off) or incorporating the former foe into the triumphant tribal union. It is through this process of superstratification that a conquest state might be born. This was by no means a predetermined outcome. Moreover, sedentary states, responding to nomadic pressures or adopting an aggressive posture towards the steppe, might also serve as the catalyst. Or, nomads, seeking to exploit a sedentary society, were compelled by the military and diplomatic requirements of these activities to organize themselves into a state. In any event, current anthropological thinking places the greatest emphasis on outside catalysts deriving from relations with sedentary state societies in the process of the formation of the states in the nomadic world. Centralized authority, however, could just as quickly disappear when the catalyst that had brought it into being was removed. Barfield views nomadic state-formation on the Chinese frontier as essentially deriving from the desire to exploit a strong Chinese economy. He has attempted to correlate nomadic state-formation, which he views as cyclical, with periods of strong, not weak, rule in China. Thus, according to this view, united prosperous China was a necessary precondition for the development of a united nomadic state whose central ruling authority would be able to survive only by exploiting the agrarian giant to the south. The nomads, moreover, with the exception of the Cinggisid Mongols, did not seek to conquer China, which would disrupt the flow of goods in which they were vitally interested, but to extort from it, what they could. Conquest came, according to him, from the Manchurian Mongolic and Manchu-Tungusic peoples, pursuing mixed nomadic and forest economies, who moved into the power vacuum when Chinese dynasties collapsed and established border statelets that eventually came to control much of Northern China. Barfield's conceptualization of this process has many interesting as well as disputed points to which we shall return in the course of this work.

Omeljan Pritsak has suggested another model of nomadic state-formation. He gives a primary role to the impact of international trade and "professional empire builders rooted in urban civilizations." Tribal chieftains, stimulated by contact with the cities and having developed a taste for the products of urban manufacture that passed in caravans across lands controlled by them, created a "pax" which both guaranteed the safety of the merchants and their goods and provided them with a share of the profits.

Despite or perhaps because of their appeal, the attitude of the nomads towards the rich cities of their sedentary neighbors was ambiguous. The urban centres with their mercantile populations and desired goods certainly beckoned. But, danger lurked in this temptation. In the Kul Tegin inscription, the Turk Bilge Qagan warns of the lure of China's "gold, silver and silk." "The words of the people (bodun) of Tabgac (China) are sweet, their treasure soft. Deceiving with sweet words and soft treasure, they make a distant people come close." Once lured in, the doom of this people is planned. China, the inscription cautions, "does not allow freedom to good, wise men, good, brave men." The Hsin tang-shu reports that when this same Bilge Qagan was tempted by the thought of building cities and temples, his famous counselor, Tonuquq dissuaded him from doing so by pointing out that it was their nomadic way of life that made them militarily superior to the armies of the T'ang. "If we adopt a sedentary urban life style," he notes, "we will be captured after only one defeat." The city, then, beckoned but also threatened with a loss of power and ultimately cultural genocide.

Nomads continually tested the military defenses of their neighbours. Momentary weakness or decline could result in their conquest of a sedentary state. This, however, could have far-reaching and often unwanted repercussions in nomadic society. The first of these was usually the sedentarization of the ruling clan, now a royal dynasty, and elements of the nomadic elite. As they adopted the trappings and culture of their newly conquered subjects, they became alienated from those of their fellow tribesmen who remained in the steppe. The rank and file nomads did not share in these benefits. The transformation of their chieftains into heaven-ordained rulers held little appeal for them. The take-over of a sedentary state, after the initial distribution of booty, gained them little. Indeed, insult was added to injury when the government then sought to tax them and control their movements. Nor were there necessarily opportunities for them in the new structure. The nomads, not having developed much in the way of government, were not, by and large, trained to be functionaries in agrarian-based, bureaucratic states, the basic institutions of which were left untouched by the nomadic conquerors. Such positions were, invariably staffed by those who had done so before, or by others, acquired elsewhere who were similarly trained. It was the nomadic elite and skilled sedentary groups that had joined them that gained from state-formation.

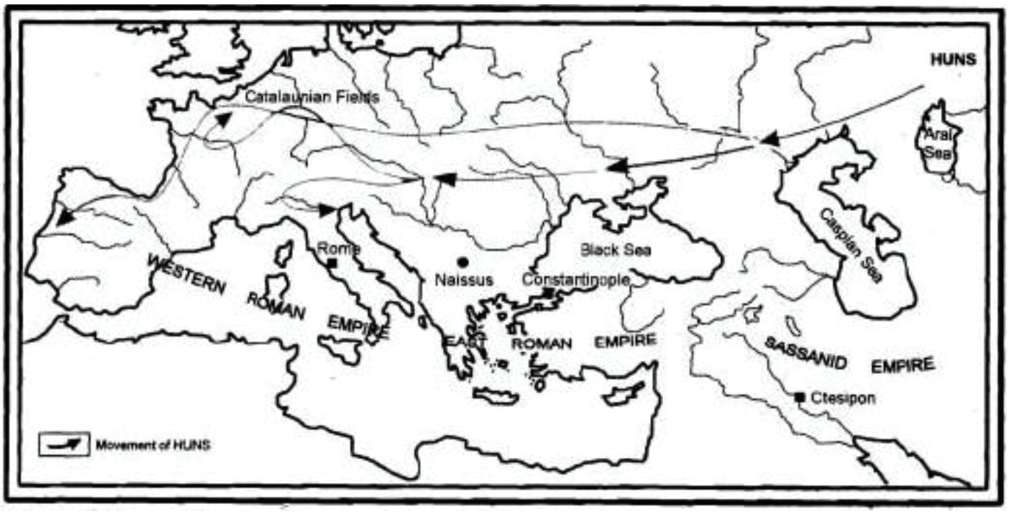
Statehood tended to further social and economic differentiation on all levels. Nomadic egalitarianism, an ideal not a reality in any event, was now even more distant. Chieftains became heavenly-conceived qagans who ruled because heaven so decreed and because they possessed the mantle of heavenly good fortune. The qagan might later become sultan and padisah, but the gulf that developed between the nomad, over whom the government now sought greater control, grew ever wider. The conquest of the sedentary states of the Near and Middle East or China led, for the most part, to the sedentarization and acculturation, to varying degrees, of their nomadic overlords and their immediate supporters. The tribesmen were often left not richer, but poorer and with less freedom. This could and did lead to revolts.

It is interesting to note that the nomadic charismatic ruling clans, the great imperial lines of which were extraordinarily long-lived (Hsiung-nu, Cinggisid, Ottoman), even when transformed into territorial rulers of largely sedentary societies, on the whole failed to resolve the question of orderly succession. The state was viewed as the common property of the ruling clan that exercised a "collective sovereignty" over the realm. Any member of the charismatic clan could claim leadership to the whole or at least part (an appendage) of the polity. This invariably led to bloody throne-struggles in which the mettle of the would-be ruler was not only tested but also demonstrated on the battlefield.

Let us now examine the context in which these empires emerged. We need to look at the process of state formation in the context of the nomadic states; moreover we also need to take into account the intrinsic nature of the nomadic empires, the forces that held these vast entities together as well as the reasons for their breakup. We will take two cases in point to illustrate the process, the Huns and their failed bid for an empire and the Mongol imperium. Both the events were to shake the sedentary world to its core.

The Huns and the Empire

As one story goes, a mounted herdsman within the Heartland followed a heifer (cow) crossed over through the shallow waters of the Strait of Kerch between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The mounted herdsman was surprised to come across a settled landmass and returned to tell the tale. These settlements were of the Ostrogoths and the nomads were the Huns. By this time the Huns had consolidated their hold on the forward grazing base of Hungary and had established their centre between the Theiss and the Danube. The Huns gradually expanded their rule, largely through vassal kings over the vast area of northern Europe stretching from the Rhine to the Baltic and the Russian forests. A raid across Caucasus was mounted in search for food. The Roman world, coping with the chain of migrations that the Huns had set up, did not see the horse archer for a while. All that was to change in a few tumultuous years.



Map: (Not to Scale) Movement of HUNS

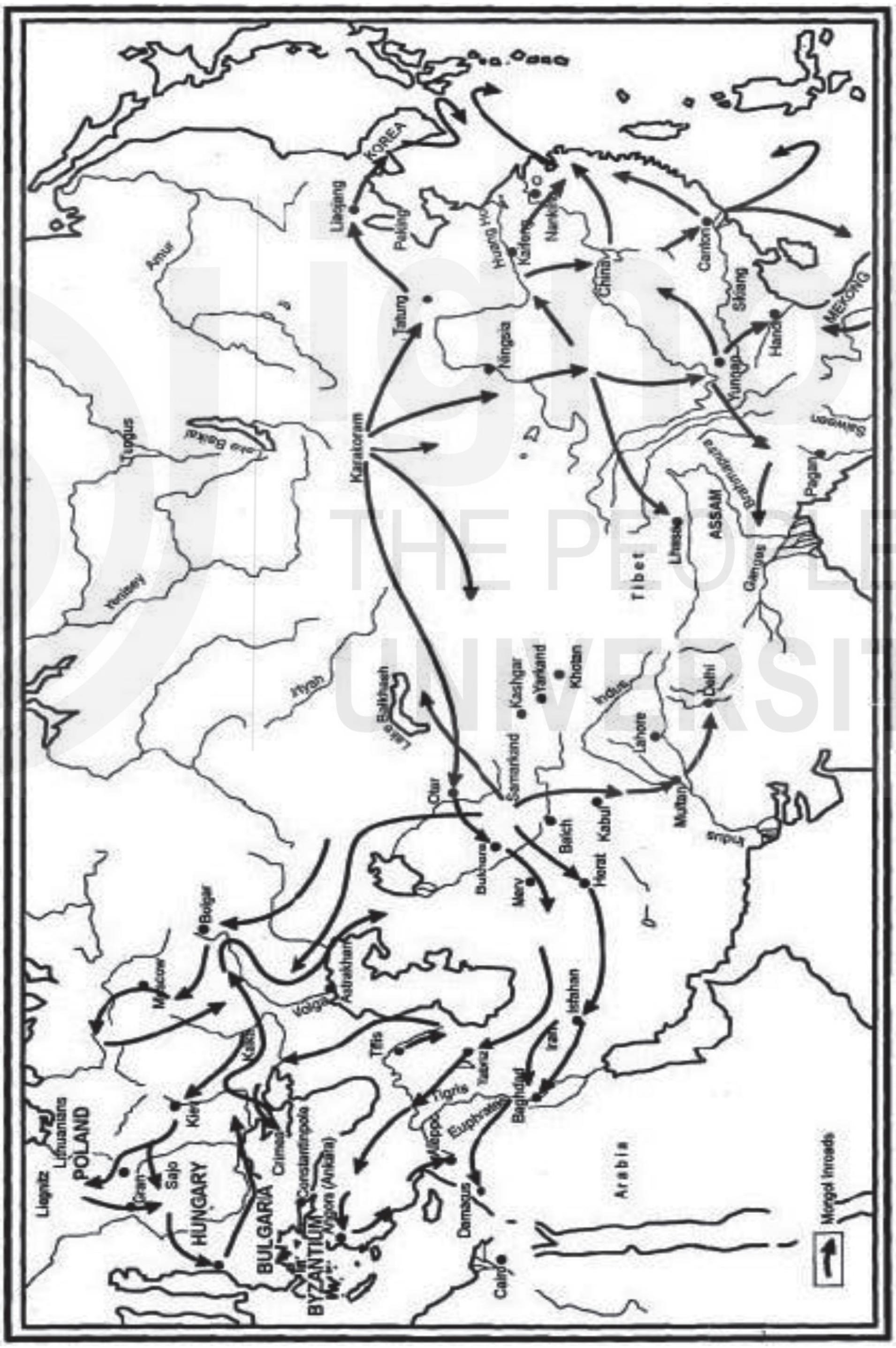
The early lines of the Hunnish royalty are shrouded in mystery. However the picture becomes clear around 420AD. Oktar was succeeded by his brother Rua; Rua by his two nephews who ruled for a time being jointly. One was Bleda, and other one who subsequently murdered his brother to come to the throne. His name was Attila, the Hun. With the forward grazing base of Hungary firmly under control, Attila launched full scale raiding expeditions in the eastern Roman empire. In three quick successive raids the back of the Eastern Empire was broken and Attila himself was at the gates of the city of Constantinople. Attila withdrew from the battle field and back to the bases. The East Roman Empire called for a truce and offered tribute. Accepting the tribute and extracting a promise of regular payments of tribute, Attila made his decision and turned his attention to the Western Roman Empire. He led a march of loot and burn in the Western Empire to the Gaul. Here, between Troyes and Chalons the two supreme powers of the Heartland and the Littoral State came to grips with each other on the Catalaunian (of Spain) fields. It was a stalemate, as the nomads did not have the advantage of the mobility that was essential for the cavalry. The Huns retreated back to their forward grazing bases, leaving behind them a bleeding Western Empire in Europe. From the Huns the mantle of the foremost steppe power in the Heartland was being passed on to the Turks.

Mongol Empires

Let us consider one more example before we discuss the finer points of the Nomads and the Empires. The second example is of course the vast empire that the Mongols built in the 13th century. One may see the Mongol Empire as a gigantic political force, bringing almost the entire continent of Asia under the control of one Great Khan. The Empire created a huge economical boom and a great exchange of culture and knowledge throughout the entire world. As a result of the Mongols, the Silk Road was reopened and the route from Europe to Asia was no longer thought to be impassable. A great deal of knowledge reached Europe, including art, science, and gunpowder; which greatly contributed in bringing Western Europe out of the dark ages. Likewise, in Asia, we saw an exchange of ideas between Persia and China. China was once again united under a single ruler. Russia was separated from the rest of Europe, but was no longer a disunited feudalistic society. The Mongols ended the short-lived Kwarezmian Empire, and brought the fall of the Abbasid Caliph and dealt a great blow to Islamic culture. Although the Mongols did indeed bring a huge list of deaths

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

and destruction, the economical boom that followed is obviously something not to be overlooked. One of the only ones that clearly did not benefit from Mongol conquest was Poland and Hungary, and that was because the Mongols withdrew and did not set up a revitalizing government. One major factor that comes through the analyses of the nomadic world and the empires it built is the inherent weakness of the nomad economy. This economy demanded a constant flow of resources from the sedentary world. The failure to garner that flow of resource meant a tremendous setback to the economy. It was this inherent weakness combined with the cavalry that led to the massive thrusts in all the direction of the littoral states and became the foundations of the nomad polity. The empires that the nomads built were therefore shortlived. They however made a lasting impact on the littoral states that ringed the heartland.


KOREA
Liaojang
Peking
Amur
Tatung
Huang Ho
Kaifeng
Nanking
China
Canton
Sikiang
Ningsia
Yunnan
Hanoi
MEKONG
Salween
Pagan
Brahmaputra
ASSAM
Lhasa
Tibet
Ganges
Tunguska
Lake Baikal
Karakoram
Yenisey
Irtysh
Lake Balkhash
Kashgar
Yarkand
Khotan
Indus
Delhi
Lahore
Multan
Indus
Otrar
Samarkand
Bukhara
Balch
Kabul
Merv
Herat
Bolgar
Moscow
Volga
Astrakhan
Isfahan
Iran
Tiflis
Tabriz
Tigris
Baghdad
Aleppo
Euphrates
Damascus
Cairo
Arabia
Kiev
Kalka
Crimea
Constantinople
Angora (Ankara)
Lithuanians
POLAND
Liegnitz
Gran
Sajo
HUNGARY
BULGARIA
BYZANTIUM
Mongol Inroads

Map: (Not to Scale) Mongol Inroads (13 - 15 centuries)

9.7 SUMMARY

The Nomadic Empires as you must have noticed had a wide spread area of influence. The empires had society, polity and economy which had distinct characteristics.

The steppe and the littoral states represent two different eco systems. The land use pattern of the steppe demarcates a clear boundary between the sedentary and the nomadic cultures.

The heartland represents the core of the societies that affected the littoral states and influenced the events on the littoral states.

The nomadic empires were essentially weak in terms of economy. This is so because the nomadic economy is inherently weak in terms of its economic strength. The nomad economy requires an infusion of resources from time to time to sustain the political structure that it strives to construct.

9.8 EXERCISES

1) Explain nomadism as a stage of development in evolution of civilizations.

2) Discuss the pattern of nomadic migrations.

3) Analyze with examples the process through which some nomadic groups could establish empires.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 10 THE LATE ROMAN WORLD

Structure

10.1 Introduction
10.2 Late Roman Empire
10.3 Roman State
  10.3.1 Kingship in the Late Roman Empire
  10.3.2 Senate at Constantinople
  10.3.3 Army
  10.3.4 Civil Administration
  10.3.5 Judicial System
10.4 Economy of Late Roman State
10.5 Social Structure
  10.5.1 Upper Classes
  10.5.2 Lower Classes and Slavery
10.6 Religion in the Late Roman Empire
  10.6.1 The Early Religious Sects
  10.6.2 Judaism
  10.6.3 Christianity in Late Roman Empire
  10.6.4 The Spread of the Christianity
  10.6.5 Christianity and the Roman State
10.7 Summary
10.8 Exercises

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 6, we discussed the process of formation of the Roman Empire. You must have noticed that in the beginning it was Roman Republic which expanded the territories of the Republic into a vast empire from 264 B.C. to 146 B.C. i.e. through the three Punic wars. Romans won whole Italian penisula, Gaul (France), Spain, North Africa, Egypt and other parts of West Asia. The Roman Republic managed to establish its influence over the whole Mediterranean region by the middle of the second century B.C. and Rome continued to be the Capital city of Roman Empire until the 4th century A.D. We also discussed how the Roman republic drew its power from the senate and on all major issues the ruler obtained the approval from the senate. Here in this Unit we will discuss the changes through which the Roman Empire passed through since the beginning of the Christian era.

Beginning from the first century A.D. the senate lost its powers and gradually the monarchy got established. The structure of state and the system of administration underwent many changes. Towards the end of the third century

A.D. the empire got divided into separate administrative zones. By the fourth century A.D. the empire was formally divided into Eastern Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople and Western Roman Empire with seat of power at Rome. However, by the firth century the Western Roman Empire ceased to exist as the empire and only Eastern Roman Empire survived.

In this Unit, We will introduce you to state, economy, society and religion in the late Roman World.

10.2 LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

After around a hundred years of prolonged anarchy and instability in which more than twenty emperors came to rule the Roman Empire and triangular conflict between the emperor, the senate and the army, in 284 A.D., Diocletian (284-305 A.D) came to power and the empire was stabilized. He streamlined the administration and for this purpose he divided the empire into four autonomous parts of which each one was ruled by an emperor. Diocletian received the eastern parts (Nico media); Maximan Italy and Africa; Constantius got Spain, Gaul and Britain and Galerius, Illyricum, Macedonia and Greece. The tetrachy (rule of four) did not produce any kind of problem due to forceful personality of Diocletian. After the retirement of Diocletian, Constantine I (306-337) became the emperor of the empire. The dynastic ambitions resulted in the end of the tetrarchy. By 324 A.D. Constantine could control the empire and became most powerful and absolute monarch. Constantine I Founded the city of Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey) which became the capital of the eastern parts of the Roman Empire. Thus Constantine I completed the process of shifting the seat of the emperor to the east. With this the political role of Rome came to an end. Under the rule of Constantine I the character of the Roman state changed significantly. Diocletian and Constantine were the chief architects of this change. Constantine I was the first Roman emperor who stopped the persecutions of Christians in the empire and he was baptized to the Christianity just before his death. After the death of Constantine the main emperors to rule were Constantius (337-61 AD), Valentinian I (364-75 A.D.), Valena 375-78 A.D. and Theodosius (379-395 A.D.) During Theodosius reign in 391 A.D. Christianity became the state religion and all heathen sects were prohibited.

After the death of Theodosius in 395 A.D. the Roman Empire was partitioned into two separate parts, the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire, between his sons. Arcadias was the emperor in the east with Constantinople as his capital. While Honorius was the emperor in the West with Rome as its capital. The former had the support of Visigothics and the latter the Vandals.

From the middle of the 4th century the central Asian tribes had increased their incursions on eastern Europe. The pressures created by them resulted in the movement of Germanic tribes into Roman territories also. By the end of 4th Century and beginning of the 5th century the attacks of Germanic tribes in Roman territory caused the collapse of the borders. Vandals the Surbi and the Alani tribes crossed the Rhine and began the occupation of Western provinces of the Rome. Other tribes who followed were the Visigoths, Ostrogoths and the Burgundians. Most serious blow came in 410 A.D. when Visigoths attacked the Rome and plundered the city.

In the middle of the 5th century the Huns launched a vigorous invasion under the leadership of Attila. Their attacks included Italy and Gaul. The Germanic tribes (Visigoths and others) joined hands with Romans to defeat them.

In 455 A.D. Rome was again invaded by the Vandals. The whole period from 395 A.D. to 476 A.D. witnessed these continued incursion and skirmishes. Finally with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476 A.D. the Western Roman Empire ceased to exist. Even the eastern Roman Empire was much weakened with loss of a number of territories. This weakened eastern empire came to be referred as Byzantine Empire which claimed itself to be the legitimate successor of the great Roman Empire. However, it was much different in its new form but enjoyed relative stability and survived for a long time. The great network of Roads was shattered, most of the institutions completely transformed. The territories under the control of Western empire were occupied by Germanic tribes and a few nobles of the erstwhile Roman Empire. The Visigoths controlled Spain, the Vandals, Africa, the Burgundians Southern Gaul and the Ostrogoths Italy. One last attempt was made by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527-63 A.D.) to revive and unify the empire by conquering Italy. But the effort proved temporary without much success.

New Socio-economic structures emerged in the West as a result of the occupation and rule over Roman territories by the Germanic tribes. The existing Roman institutions and structures were not completely removed. Most of the civil and judicial institutions continued to co-exist with the new structures for a long time. However the army was completely under the control of the new rulers.

10.3 ROMAN STATE

As we have already discussed in the previous section how Augustus successfully maintained a balance between the three components of the Roman state – the emperor, the senatorial oligarchy and army. Augustus developed a separate bureaucracy which owed its authority to him and was loyal to him only. He was careful to use the titles of the officials on the lines of the republic and got them appointed through senate which was only notional and satisfied them to some extent. His priority was the consolidation of the empire rather than expansion. He succeeded in monopolizing all the power of the state. After the fall of the Judio-claudian dynasty the Army asserted itself and appointed Vespasian as the emperor (68 A.D). His dynasty which continued till 96 A.D. is referred as Flavian dynasty (after Flavius the family name of Vespasian. After the fall of Flavian dynasty the senate appointed Nerva as emperor by re- asserting its authority. As referred earlier till 180 A.D. the practice of naming the successor started by Nerva continued. During this period the expansion of the Roman territories was witnessed along with the strengthening of the monarchy as an institution. From the end of the 2nd century the army began to play a crucial role in the selection of emperor and was playing an assertive role. The situation continued for almost next hundred years. The relationship between the senate and army gradually weakened and ultimately broke down.

10.3.1 Kingship in the Late Roman Empire

In the reign of Diocletian the Roman Empire was finally divided into two territorial parts – one was known as Western part and the second as Eastern. Italy, Gaul, Spain and North Africa were the parts of Western empire and Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and modern Balkan countries of east Europe were parts of the Eastern empire. The monarchy of late Roman Empire was firmly rooted in the eastern provinces. In this region the emperor could exercise unrestricted authority without caring about the western aristocracy. Diocletian spent most of his time in eastern part of the empire and he made his capital the city of Nicomedia near the Black Sea in northern Anatolia. Maximian was the ruler of Italy and he stayed at Milan rather than at Rome to avoid the interference of the senate and the army in his administration. Now the Emperors were decided by factional struggles between military commanders. The senate had become a defunct institution. In the late Roman Empire most of the emperors came from Danubian - Balkan region of Europe. The reason for the rise of these Pannonian or Illyrian rulers was the role played by the Danubian and Balkan provinces in the supply of recruits for the army. These regions had become traditional reservoir of professional soldiers and officers for the army.

In the later Roman Empire Diocletian was the first emperor who organized the state on monarchical pattern and Diocletian's traditions of monarchical system continued for next hundred years. In the beginning the emperors of the Roman Empire did not adopt any royal title nor did they wear any crown and splendid dress to show their imperial status. Diocletian finally abolished finally the traditions of republic and he started the traditions of Hellenistic emperors. He presented himself as a divine monarch. He began to wear splendid beautiful royal dresses. He also started to place a crown on his head. He adopted the royal title as dominus et deus (divine lord and master). The later Roman Empire is being called the dominate by the historians. Diocletian introduced new ceremonics in the court to maintain the dignity and authority of the monarch. Diocletian built a magnificent palace at Salonae (modern Yugoslavia) where he lived after his retirement. In this manner he started the era of pomp and splendour of monarchical tradition. The glorification of the emperor and his military abilities became permanent characteristics of a Roman emperor. The ordinary citizens were reminded of their victorious campaigns in various ways on a regular basis. In creative writings this tradition was initiated by the leading Roman poet Pablius Vergilius Maro (70 - 19 B.C.). The victory arches were not only built in Rome but in other important cities of the empire. Honorary statues of the emperors were also built with glorifying inscriptions.

10.3.2 Senate at Constantinople

In the era of republic and principate the senate was an important political institution. Its members were elected from among the patricians of Rome for life and these members made a ruling oligarchy. This ruling oligarchy ruled the Roman republic and later on it started to elect the emperors of Roman Empire. In this way senate was a very powerful body to run the administration of Roman republic in the era of Roman emperor also. But after the emergence of absolute monarchy in the reign of Diocletian and Constantine I, it had become a defunct political body. Although Constantine established parallel senate in Constantinople this senate was constituted from the members of provincial elites of the east. It had no legislative powers and it was totally submissive to the emperor. It had mainly municipal role in Constantinople.

10.3.3 Army

From the very beginning the army was an important component of the Roman state. Roman army was the key factor in the expansion and protection of the Roman Empire and it was headed by the emperor. In the era of emperors the

Roman state had become the strongest military power of its time. The army was regularly deputed by various emperors in the border provinces to protect its territory against the non - Roman World especially against the Parthians in the east and the Germanic tribes on the Rhine and Danube. The soldiers of Roman republic used to stay away from their homes when they were in the battlefields and often they lost their property at home too. After the downfall of Republic, the soldiers were being used for political advancement by the army generals. From the first century A.D. the Roman army had become main instrument in installing various generals to the throne of the Roman Empire as emperors. It was Augustus (first emperor of Roman Empire) who allotted the land to thousands of soldiers. Such measures created discipline and loyalty in the army and helped to convert the army into a permanent and professional force. In the late Roman Empire, Emperor Diocletian reorganized the army and introduced conscription. In third and fourth century A.D., the total strength of the army was nearly 450,000 soldiers. It had now become the custom for sons of soldiers to enter the army. It was ordered by Diocletian and Constantine that the sons of soldiers who were fit for service must adopt a military career and by applying the new capitation system of taxation required landed proprietors to send a given proportion of their coloni as the levy. From early 3rd century onwards number of soldiers were stationed in guard - posts along highways to maintain internal security and police the countryside. The increasing number of these stations was a symptom of the enhancing social unrest in this era. Roman officials were also forced to take steps to check dissatisfaction among provincial citizens with the practices of the Roman administration and other local social disturbances destabilizing peace in the Roman territory. In the late empire large numbers of barbarian volunteers were incorporated into the army and these barbarian volunteers provided many elite regiments of later empire. Most of the top military commands were now entrusted to men of equestrian (horse riding) rank only. Previously the top officials of the military were being selected from the senatorial aristocracy, but Diocletian displaced systematically the officials of senatorial aristocracy not only from the military but from the civil administration also. This action of Diocletian restored the civil administration, but it created a fissure within the structure of power. The political unification of the Mediterranean (Western Europe and West Asia) now brought with it a social division within the dominant classes. Constantine I changed his predecessor's policy towards the traditional nobility of the West and appointed many of them as governors of provinces and administrators. But their relegation from the officials of the army was permanent. After the conversion of Constantine and the defeat of Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge the character of the aristocracy across the empire as a whole was radically transformed by the great institutional change of Constantine's reign, the Christianization of the state. A number of newly converted Christians were appointed to the important positions of the administration and this had an institutional impact over the later Roman state. Most of the newly converted Christians were recruited from the East and number of them became the members of the second senate developed in Constantinople. The establishment of the Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, threatened the secular fabric of the state. The clerical bureaucracy was a new addition with the secular bureaucracy of the Roman state and the clerical bureaucracy became more powerful than the secular.

The command of the military was in the hands of magister equitum and below them were the duces of the limitanci and the comites of the comitatness, all possessing commands which were exclusively military. In the reign of Valitine I forts and camps were constructed with a rational lay out.

In the reign of Constantine the army was again expanded. He created new cavalry and infantry units. He also built up its strategic reserves. By the end of the 4th century A.D. the army's strength of Roman state went up to nearly 650,000 - more than four times of the early Principate. In this way the later Roman Empire was a powerful state with a vast military political and ideological superstructures.

10.3.4 Civil Administration

In the later empire the career in the civil services was built up around a pyramidal hierarchy of bureaucrats. The post of a bureaucrat would confer on him a certain style and dignity from whatever point he started. The rulers were the head of officials. The officials were being called magistrates and they were also heads of various departments. The officials were supposed to remain standing in the presence of their sovereign. Many changes were introduced in the administration after the partition of the empire. The creation of a second capital at Constantinople caused two senates to come into being, and a double set of certain posts, such as the prefecture of the city and the presidency of the senate. Most of the officials were nominated separately by both the emperors from the year 396 onwards. Every metropolis was to have its own police, corn supply, and judicial system, and each had its practors (annually elected magistrates) and quaestors (magistrate working as paymaster or state treasurer).

The provincial administration was very crucial in the late Roman Empire for maintaining law and order in the far - flung areas. With the down - fall of the senate's power the senatorial provinces disappeared and their administration became an absolute preserve of the emperor. Diocletian made radical reforms in the provincial administration and he divided the whole empire into hundred provinces. The number of officials was increased and they had become efficient officials of the empire. The frontiers were made more protective. Diocletian merged various provinces into a single diocese which was administered by an official acting on behalf of the praetorian prefect and under the military control of a leader. In the 4^{th} century the East, Pontus, Asia, Thrace, Moesia, Pannonia, Italy, Africa, Spain, Viennensis, Gallia and Britain were the important dioceses. The administration of the provinces in the late empire was headed by the governors.

10.3.5 Judicial System

The Roman civil law was the basis of the Roman imperial state. The principate raised Roman jurists to official positions within the state when Augustus selected prominent juriconsues as advisers and conferred imperial authority on their interpretations of the law. The emperors, on the other hand, made the legislations by edicts and introduced new rules bringing some modifications in the traditional law. The development of an autocratic public law had become much more complex and composite than it had been under the Republic. In the later Roman imperial state the emperor's will had force of law. Under Diocletian all justice was exercised in the emperor's name and administered by his officials in the provinces by the *praesides* and in the capital cities by the *praefectus Urbi*.

The civil law protected the interests of the rich classes and had provided the guarantee of property right to these classes from the very beginning. The criminal law was essentially designed for the lower classes and remained as arbitrary and repressive as it had always been a social safeguard for the whole ruling order. Under Constantine criminal law became exceptionally severe. Severe criminal laws were formed by the Roman ruling class to take action against various Christian sects which had been declared heretical sects. Despite all these shortcomings, the Roman Empire produced the great systematization of civil jurisprudence in the 3rd century. However, it was only in the 6th century that a codification was carried under the emperor Justinian. His *Corpus Juris* Civilis (Body of civil laws) became the foundation for the legal system which were subsequently devised throughout Europe.

10.4 ECONOMY OF LATE ROMAN STATE

Reorganization of Roman state in the 4th Century A.D. produced a temporary growth in the urban development and restorted monetary stability with the issue of gold coins. But both recoveries were limited. The urban growth was largely concentrated in new military and administrative centres. This growth was patronized by the emperors and Milan, Sardica and above all Constantinople became important urban centres in the late Roman Empire. According to Perry Andenson urban trade and industry progressively declined in all provinces of late Roman Empire. There was a gradual ruralisation of the Empire. But in rural areas far - reaching changes were taking place and new mode of production began to come into existence. In the Antiquity the slave mode of production was connected to a system of political and military expansion. Now the imperial frontier had ceased to advance in the late Roman Empire. The slaves therefore were converted by landowners into dependent tenants to the soil. The villages of smallholders and free tenants lost their independent character to the landlords in the search for protection against fiscal extortions and conscription by the state and their economic position had become like ex - slaves. In this way from the second century A.D. onwards the free peasants started to lose their independent status and they were tied to that landlords' estate. The emperors of the later Roman Empire from Diocletian to Valens and Arcachius had proclaimed that tenants were to be regarded to be bound to their villages for the purposes of tax collection. Thereafter the judicial powers of landlords had been increased over the dependent tenants (coloni) in the 4th and 5th centuries. But the slavery did not disappear with these changes and the state structure was still based on slavery in the later Roman Empire and it also continued till the end of the empire in the West. The role of slaves in urban artisanal production began to decline, but they were still the backbone of household services for the patricians. In Italy, Spain and Gaul the slaves were being used as the main labour force by the landlords at their latifundia. The whole economic system of late Roman Empire was based on the relationships between the dependent rural producer, the landlord and the state. In the later Roman Empire the rise of army and bureaucratic machine had become very vast and the late Roman state imposed various kinds of taxes to fulfil the needs of vast state machinery. The citizens were taxed in the form of unpaid military service for the state and they had to procure their own fighting equipment. According to Marx, "It was through wars that the Roman Patricians destroyed the plebeians, by compelling them to serve as soldiers. ... and made paupers of them." Another kind of compulsory services was to be performed by the common people for the state. These services were known as angaria. For these type of services the labouring people could be hired for official purposes like carrying loads, construction of buildings and making roads without paying the wages.

In the later empire the policy of increased taxation was pursued by the Roman state. This policy was successful in the east but it produced crisis in Western part of the empire. The Western aristocracy continuously increased their share in the taxes and the increasing weight of taxes was passed on to peasants, coloni (dependent tenants) artisans and petty-traders. It had negative impact on agricultural production, manufacture and trade. The state appointed tax collectors called decuriones and curiales. The curiales became hereditary tax collectors and most of them were absentee landlords. They had to collect taxes from the peasants, artisans and traders for the state. In collusion with the landlords the curiales stole the state taxes. This practice of stealing taxes was prevalent even in the third century A.D. Diocletian made legal provisions to check these malpractices of curiales. In the late Roman Empire Diocletian and his successors streamlined the tax system. But they could manage it successfully in the eastern part of the empire only. By this time the Western oligarchy had ceased to support the emperors and the collection of taxes in the Western part of the empire through curiales became a difficult task for the state. Now the Western oligarchy had no role in the selection of the emperor and the city of Rome had also lost its administrative importance. The Western ruling class not only refused to pay the imperial taxes but they started to protect the peasants against the imperial tax system. As a result it was now more difficult for the state to collect the regular taxes from the landed classes of Western part of the empire. This speeded up the process of disintegration of the empire in the West.

10.5 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In the reign of Diocletian and Constantine a number of changes in social, economic conditions within Roman society can be noticed. During this period the colonate (a system of bonded labour) emerged as the basis of agricultural production to some extent replacing slavery. This meant the creation of self sufficient estates worked by quasi-slaves dependent upon their landowner. They had to pay tributes and taxes to their *latifundias*, but the system became more and more independent of a market based monetary economy. The rise of this new form of exploitation and organisation brought about many social tensions, rebellions and popular movements. Diocletian tried to take these circumstances into account and to find new models to preserve the empire, its territory and its army.

10.5.1 Upper Classes

The propertied classes of the late Roman Empire were known as equestrian class. This class was not only settled in Italy, but the members of this class were also settled for business reasons in provincial towns and occupying magistracies and priesthoods in their cities and providing commanders of the army. It became the custom too, to grant Roman citizenship and equestrian status to men who had done useful work for the state. In the late Roman Empire the equestrians were faithful adherents of the emperors and they were being appointed on the prominent positions of civil administration and military by the emperors. The wealthy plebeians and freedmen made attempts to attain equestrian status, or they tried to acquire the right to display the outward signs of equestrian rank, such as the use of ‘gold ring’. There were other social groups who had higher social status, but they had not attained the membership of equestrians. They were owners of lands, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, traders and high - grade employees. They lived in Rome, other towns of Italy and provincial cities.

The period from middle of the 4th century to the end of 6th century witnessed many changes in the nature of the powers and authority of the upper classes. The higher bureaucrats emerged as a new hereditary aristocracy. The phenomenon was more evident in the east. The senate of the Constantinople was composed of 2000 such families by the end of 4th century who had acquired this through hereditary claim by passing of authority from father to the son. New ecclesiastical class of bishops and priests also emerged with their control over large landed properties under the authority of the church.

10.5.2 Lower Classes and Slavery

The lower classes consisted of such men who provided the services to the higher classes. The peasants were the biggest such group. Potters, teachers, entertainers and prostitutes may be included among them. There were also the free labourers, whose numbers were also quite high. They were hired for the construction of buildings and manual work. While the upper classes expanded the enhanced taxation and burden of providing them fell on the peasantry. The peasantry tried to escape to army, church, and as workmen into cities. This created an unprecedented shortage of farm labour.

There were also skilled workers, such as bakers, silversmiths, wool workers. These workers belonged to trade associations or *collegia*, which possessed social, religious and sometimes quasi - political functions, as well as providing organisation for the business with which they were concerned. The trade guilds were also active in their cities.

The lives of the lower classes were transformed when the economic position of the empire worsened in the late Roman Empire and the government became more autocratic. Hereditary system was introduced in many professions by the late Roman emperors. This system became a general feature of the ordering of society. To keep various professions going they were gradually transformed into caste membership from father to son. This happened in the army and also in civil administration.

Slavery was an important social category in the Roman republic as well as in the reign of Roman emperors. In second century B.C. the Punic Wars fought in Greece, Macedonia and Syria gave a boost to the slave trade and slave labour became very cheap. There was enormous increase in their numbers and they were put to work on the *latifundia* of Italy, Spain, Gaul and the province of Africa. The Roman aristocracy extracted the surplus from the agrarian production which was produced by the hard labour of slaves and they became very rich. Roman law recognised slaves as a form of property. The Roman law did not provide any kind of protection to the slaves and the master’s authority over the slave was absolute. The slaves in the Roman Empire were bought and sold like the cattle and they were like a commodity (see Unit 13). The state apparatus, even in the late empire, rested on slave labour. Slaves provided lavish household services for the rich classes in the Western and eastern parts of the empire. In Italy, Spain and Gaul they remained relatively thick on the ground in the countryside. They did hard work at the *latifundia* of provincial landowners. But from third century A.D. the slave mode of production began to face a crisis.

In the late Roman Empire there were two types of changes in the countryside. First it had become difficult to maintain or keep the slaves because the cost of slaves had become too high due to short supply. The supply was related with the wars and in the third-fourth centuries A.D. the expansion of the empire came to a halt. Their demographic growth became very low because the life conditions of slaves were very oppressive.

Now the slaves were permanently settled by the landlords on their estates and they were given small plots to look after themselves. This was in accordance with the Roman law which had a provision which entitled slaves to own some property called *peculium*. The earnings of *peculium* could be used by slaves to engage in economic activities pursued by them. The landlords started to collect surplus produce from these slaves. Secondly, at the same time villages of smallholders and free peasants which had always existed side by side with slaves in the empire fell under the patronage of great agrarian magnates in their search for protection against fiscal exaction and conscription by the state and came to occupy economic position very similar to those of ex - slaves. From the 2nd century A.D. the new category of *coloni* came into existence. They were originally tenant farmers and it was also applied on those free tenant farmers who did not own their land. They had limited means and were provided seeds and implements by landlords and the coloni in turn handed over a share of produce to the owners. The number of Roman and Italian colonies were also known as *colonus* (plural *coloni*). Diocletion systematized the arrangement by imposing restrictions on the movement from the place where they were registered. In the reign of Constantine new regulations were made to permanently attach the *coloni* to the soil. These provisions laid down that *coloni* be transferred with the land if there was a change of ownership. This put an end to the status of a coloni of free tenants who had autonomy to move to other plots as they wished. (Amar Farooqui, 2001, pp. 294-95). This situation had led to the emergence of the colonate and simultaneous decline of *latifundia*.

The *colonus* of the principate a voluntary tenant of land, free to move when his lease expired, became like a serf of the later empire, tied to the land by a hereditary bond. Constantine declared in 332 A.D., " Any person with whom a *colonus* belonging to some other person is found shall not only restore him to his place of origin but be liable for his poll tax for the period. It will furthermore be proper that coloni themselves who plan flight should be put in irons like slaves, so that they may be compelled by a servile penalty to perform the duties appropriate to them as free men." This hereditary character of the bond had become law in 364 A.D. According to this law, ' the slaves and *coloni* and their sons and grandsons who had deserted imperial estates to join the army or the civil service should be recalled'. These developments in the late Roman society and state show that the free peasant and tenant lost their independence and heralded the beginning of serfdom of Medieval Europe.

But the slavery did not completely disappear. It continued in the late Roman society and *latifundia* also remained in existence in some areas. Even in the 5th century A.D. some big landowners were the owner of thousands of slaves. The slaves were also employed for domestic work, mining and at the lowest levels of the society and state.

Since the third century A.D. the barbarian tribes started to invade Roman territories and in 4th and 5th centuries A.D. they became inhabitants of these territories. The different tribes like Germanic in the north, nomadic, Asian in the north - east, Arab or Semitic origin in the south, became neighbours more or less well acquainted with the empire, familiar with the Roman mode of life and society or even themselves as members of Roman society. These different tribes not only introduced new ideas about political and social institutions but also realised them inside the Roman Empire. Thus a period of crisis, decline and break - up influenced and at last determined the history in the Mediterranean between the fourth and seventh century.

10.6 RELIGION IN THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Roman Empire since the beginning had a tradition which was tolerant towards various cults and sects. In the period under discussion new religions like Judaism and Christianity got introduced to the Romans. Of these Christianity after initial hostility got wider acceptance in the whole Roman World. In this section we will discuss various Religious traditions in the Roman Empire and the spread of Christianity.

10.6.1 The Early Religious Sects

In the age of Roman republic there were various deities, goddesses and gods which were being worshipped by the Roman elites and common people. The supreme deity of the city of Rome was Jupiter who was regarded as the king of gods. Mars was also another important deity because he was considered the god of war. In the Roman Empire the religion was an integral part of the Roman state and the religion was polytheistic (belief in or worship of many gods). In every part of the empire especially in the West, the people followed different religious cults. Some of these retained their original names and cult practices, others had altered as a result of syncretism (unite or reconcile various sects or cults). Moreover some of the ancient shrines continued to survive and they were worshiped by their devotees. In France, Italy, Britain and Spain, many native gods were worshiped not only under their syncretistic names of Mars and Apollo but under the names they bore of old, such as Teutates, Caturix, Dunatis, Rigisamus (all these identified with Mars). In other parts of the Roman Empire, the Greeks, the Anatolian communities and the ordinary Syrians, Mesopotamians, Egyptians and north Africans had their own gods and goddesses. Druidism was popular in Britain and Gaul. It was a tribal religion. In this religion the forces of nature were worshipped. But the Romans ruthlessly suppressed Druidisn in the mid first century A.D. Woden and Thor were the deities of German tribes.

The Roman state religion was managed and organised by *pontifex*. In the beginning of the republic the *pontifex* (priest) was elected from among the plebeians and he had to perform all the religious rituals of the state. In later period the chief priest was called *pontifex maximus*. He was the head of Roman state religion and a very powerful political as well as religious authority. Augustus was the first Roman emperor who declared himself *pontifex maximus* and in the later period many other Roman emperors also adopted this title.

The dominant religion of the Romans may not be considered as the sole religion of all the people of the Roman Empire. There were quite a number of Eastern cults which were introduced and expanded in the empire. These cults entered the main territories of empire through various ways of expansion and were carried by the soldiers, traders and slaves to various regions of the empire.

Atagartis, Cybele and Serapis were the chief cults of the eastern part of the empire. These cults were originated in Syria, Anatolia and Egypt respectively. Atagartis was a prominent goddess in Syria. Those Roman soldiers who were stationed in Syria had faith in the Atargartis goddess. These soldiers regularly prayed this goddess for protcetion. When the soldiers left Syria they carried the traditions of this goddess to other parts of the empire.

The Cybele was a popular cult of Anatolia and it was related with the mother goddess called Cybele. Cybele was the first cult which was made a part of the Roman religion. It was adopted during the days of Second Punic War (218- 201 B.C.) This cult was deeply associated with bull sacrifices. It had become popular in various forms throughout Roman Empire from the time the Asian part of the empire was integrated into the Roman Empire. One such cult, the Mithras which originated in Iran, entered Rome during the reign of Pompey emperor. Mithras was God of light and of the Sun. According to this cult the universe is ruled by two opposing supernatural forces. One force is being represented by the goodness and another is evil or darkness. It was a philosophy of dualism. It was believed that there will be a time when the forces of evil will be finally defeated by the forces of goodness. It was, therefore, suggested that the people should take the side of goodness. This cult was adopted by the Roman soldiers when they were posted in the eastern region of the empire. It had also become popular among Romans who were inhabitants in the Roman territories of the Western Asia. The cult's places of worship were being called Mithracums, spread all over the empire.

10.6.2 Judaism

Judaism and Christianity originated in the region which at present constitutes Palestine and Israel in West Asia. Before the emergence of Christianity the Judaism (the followers were called Jews) was the major religion of this region and Judaism provided the fertile ground for the birth of Christianity. In the fourth century A.D. Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Before we discuss the causes of the rise and spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire we would like to give a brief account of the Judaism.

Judaism is a very old religion of the World. The story of its origin is contained in the *Book of Genesis*. This book is a part of the Old Testament of the Bible. The Judaism had begun with the movements of Western Semitic tribes in West Asia. The Judaism was founded during the course of a migration of tribes led by Abraham. These people travelled from Mesopotamia to Syria - Palestine and they were known as Israelites. They believed in the existence of one true god Yahweh. It is understood that Abraham made an agreement with Yahweh to give up the worship of idols and of all deities. The period is dated around 1800 B.C. Till eighth century B.C. the Judaism had become a monotheistic religion of West Asia with substantial number of followers. They believed that there was only one supreme god, known as Yahweh. He was to be worshiped and there was no place for idol worship in the Judaism.

It was their firm belief that Hebrew religion or Judaism was a part of the long tradition of prophets who taught the people about the ethics and moral values of Judaism. *Torah* was their religious book. In 63 B.C. Pompay, the Roman ruler defeated Seleucids ruler of Syria Antiochus III and he made Syria a Roman province including Palestine with headquarters at Antioch. Later on Palestine was placed under Roman prefects. In religious matters, the Jews were given some degree of autonomy. Most of the Jews accepted the domination of the Romans but there were regular tensions and discords between them because the Jews refused to recognise the gods of Romans or to participate in official Roman worship. Many Jews fled the territories of Israel and settled outside the Roman domination. After few decades of Roman rule the Roman state recognised the Judaism and the Jews were granted freedom to some extent to celebrate their religious rituals.

In the process of the growth and spread of Judaism a number of sects with different interpretations of religious tenets had developed among the Jews in the region of Palestine. Of these the four major one's were Sadducees, who believed in strict interpretation of the laws of prophet Moses; the Pharisees, who believed in varying interpretation of the laws of Moses; the Essenes believed in physical resurrection of the body and had established some sort of separate monastic community; the zealots who believed in liberating their regions from the control of Romans. Roman rule and their conflicts with Jewish population had given rise to a firm belief among the Jews that a god sent Messiah will come to liberate their territories and exiled Jews will return to their free land. The Zealots resisted the Roman rule and a serious conflict against them resulted in the revolt (AD 66 – 70). The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed by the Romans, Jerusalem was captured and Jews were persecuted.

The birth of Jesus and his early teachings were considered by many as the coming of prophesied Messiah.

10.6.3 Christianity in Late Roman Empire

As we know Jesus (C 4 B.C. – C 29 A.D) was born at Bethlehem, near Jerusalem sacred city of Jews, into a humble family. (The exact date of his birth is not known. It is believed that it was around the first year A.D. or a little before it. However, the period before his birth is considered as before Christ and the start of Christian year since his birth is considered after that) Jesus stayed in his home town situated in north Palestine, for thirty years of his life. According to traditions, he spent forty days in the desert of Palestine and coming out of his desert stay he began to spread the divine message which had been revealed to him.

It seems that Jesus was quite dissatisfied with the Judaism of the period. He felt that the *rabbis* (Jewish religious leaders and scholars) were more involved with the legal issues, rituals and rules regulations of every day life rather than the moral transformation of the inner life. The ideas of Jesus were seen as threat by the Jewish priests and scholars while a number of Jews from among common people saw him as a Messiah who was there to liberate them and show the righteous path and became his followers. The famous of these were 12 disciples. Roman rulers also saw Jesus as a threat around whom the rebels might rally around to revolt against the Roman rule. Some Jewish leaders handed over Jesus to Romans. The Roman Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate in 30 A.D.

pronounced death sentence for him and he was crucified. At the time of his death he was not identified with a separate religion. It came later with the belief of his followers that he was raised from the dead on the third day after he was buried. This belief in resurrection helped his followers in spreading the message that he was a divine who was sent on earth to redeem it from misery and show people the path of heaven. This led to the establishment of a new religion called Christianity.

The new religion was at first only a Jewish sect. Romans, therefore in the beginning could not make clear cut difference between the Jews and Christians. The name Christian came from the title Christ (Messiah or Lord's anointed) given to Jesus.

After the death of Jesus a group of his disciples became active in spreading his teachings. This group was led by his great disciple Simon Peter (St. Peter). In the beginning, these disciples were active in Jerusalem and they converted many Jews of Palestine into Christianity. For the purpose Peter visited many other parts of the empire including Italy and Rome. At Rome many inhabitants were converted into the Christianity by him. Christians believed in monotheism and they were against the idol worship. The Romans converted to Christianity refused to worship the idols of Roman gods and deities and the statues of the dead emperors. The Roman emperors started the persecution of the Christians. Another reason of their persecution was that the preachers of Christianity had become popular among the common inhabitants of the Roman Empire. The Roman ruling class, began to be suspicious against the Christians and Peter was executed by Roman emperor Nero. St. Peter is believed to be the founder of Roman Church at Rome. Over the years other Churches were established in Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and later in Gaul and in Spain. Stories of the sayings and doings of Jesus were collected and by the end of the first century came to be known as the New Testament and later part of *Bible*. The appeal of Jesus Christ was the greatest among the poor, labourers and slaves.

St. Paul (A.D. c 5 – c 67) was another Saint who made a great contribution in the growth of Christianity. Paul was born in a Jewish family of Anatolia. He accepted the Christianity as his religion in 37 A.D. He was regarded as the real founder of the Church. Paul travelled throughout the Roman Empire to propagate the ideas of Jesus and he sent religious missions to various places of the empire. Paul was a well educated person and he used the well known terminology of Judaism for the propagation of Christianity. In his Epistles he began the work of building a Christian philosophy that could appeal to men of all races.

10.6.4 The Spread of the Christianity

The Christian religion became a popular religion of the Roman Empire by the third century. A.D. The imperial government persecuted Christians largely for political reasons but the popularity or acceptability of the Christianity among the common people of the Roman Empire was enhancing day by day.

The Christian faith inspired the mass of people with the message of love. One to one relationship with God was an idea for the masses who did not feel any allegiance to the Roman Empire and gave them the feeling of brotherhood of a group of faithful.

One of the important factors responsible for the spread of the Christianity in such a large area was the vast spread of the Roman Empire. The area which had already been united politically and culturally by the Roman Empire facilitated the spread with unified laws, administration, language and network of roads.

The Christianity could be presented as a religion open to all without any hidden grades of initiation. It was taken by all type of people as their own religion and it could bring together poor and rich in worship, in burial and by making women the equal to man and slave to master. Many devoted missionaries propagated the Gospel of Christ selflessly and with full devotion devoid of any selfish interests.

The Christian missionaries started to take interest in the awakening of the poor classes. This awakening was led by the social organization of Christian communities, with their sense of solidarity with the fellow human beings. The Christian missionaries also took the relief works for the needy in their hands. Jesus had said, "Love your neighbour as yourself", and his words were followed by the missionaries.

The Christianity also spread to other parts of the Roman Empire through trade and commerce. The inhabitants of great trading and commercial centres were relatively accessible. Antioch in Syria, Ephesus and other cities of Asia Minor, Corinth and Thessalonia and Rome became the centre of rapid spread of religion from the end of the second century A.D. Egypt and parts of Africa too had important centres of Christian life and preaching.

Apart from the message of love and brotherhood the institution of church also helped in this spread of the faith throughout the Roman Empire. The early Church had been able to develop its theology and to create a remarkable administrative structure of the Church. Roman society was a polytheistic society where one man could belong to many cult and heresy was an issue to be dealt with. A tight organization, therefore, was necessary. The most respected members of each congregation became priests and in each city one priest was designated as bishop. The bishop was responsible for supervising all the Christian congregations in his city and in the surrounding villages. By the end of the second century A.D. some bishops were recognized as leaders in their provinces. They were authorized to resolve disputes on various interpretations and doctrines. One of the earliest controversies concerned the doctrine of the Trinity. Priest Arius (AD 250 – 336, a Greek priest in Alexandria) argued that the Son and Holy Spirit had been created by and were therefore subordinate to the God the father. Other theologians attacked his arguments and bitter differences arose among the Christian theologians. For resolving these differences Constantine called a council of bishops at Nicaea (in Asia Minor) in 325 A.D. After some arguments the Council of Nicaea produced a confession of faith that completely rejected the teachings of Arius. But the differences were not completely resolved by this council and new doctrinal disputes continued to emerge and councils of bishops had to meet at frequent intervals. Those who did not accept the majority decisions of these councils were excommunicated from the Christianity. Broadly speaking by the end of fourth century A.D. the Catholic Church had prevailed everywhere in the Roman Empire. The systematic organization of the early Church was an innovation in the ancient world. It helped to establish the supremacy of Christianity over many religious sects of the Roman Empire.

The bishop of Rome had the superior authority over all other bishops of the empire because it was generally accepted that St. Peter (the successor to Christ) had established the church at Rome and was also martyred here. The bishop at Rome was later called Pope and occupied the highest position in the hierarchy of the churches all over.

10.6.5 Christianity and the Roman State

Christianity grew rapidly enough during the third century to alarm the Roman state and emperors. Emperor Diocletian decided to suppress the popularity of the Christians. On February 24, 303, Diocletian declared that the property of Christians and the Church along with the sacred books used for religious service should be confiscated. The army and the bureaucracy were empowered to impose death on those Christians who tried to oppose these orders. Large numbers of Christians were executed in all parts of the empire on the basis of this decree. The emperor Galerius was not in agreement with these decrees of Diocletian and on April 30, 311, he issued an edict of toleration towards such Christians who were not willing to return to paganism.

The following of Christianity was growing very fast in the third and fourth century despite suppression of Christians by the Roman state. Thousands of Christians had already joined the Roman army, they were also part of the bureaucracy in the eastern part of the empire. After the battle of the Mulvian Bridge in 312, Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration ending the persecution of Christians. After this declaration the Christianity occupied the centre stage and it became dominant religion of the empire by the end of the fourth century A.D. He was also converted to the Christianity and became the first Roman emperor who was a Christian. By the year 392 A.D. Theodosius I issued orders to make Christianity as the state religion of the empire and declared worship of pagan gods against the law.

The Christianity grew further in the following centuries and spread its wings in other parts outside the Roman Empire.

10.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit we have discussed about the late Roman state, society and religion. The late Roman state was an absolute monarchical state. The Roman emperor was a sovereign authority and was considered as divine representative of the god. The Roman emperors were also the symbol of deities. The components of state like senate, army, civil bureaucracy and judicial apparatus was controlled by the patrician elite. During this period the mighty Roman Empire was divided into Eastern and Western parts. The decentralization of the administration was experimented toward the end of 3rd century A.D. under the joint rule of Diocletian and Maximian. The Roman Empire still largely depended on slave mode of production and it extracted the surplus production of slave labour with the help of slave masters. The late Roman society was divided among various classes. The patricians and slave owners who resided mostly at the developed urban centres of the empire were the ruling and dominant class. The plebeians, free tenants, colonates, urban proletariats and slaves were the lower classes of the Roman Empire. The lower classes had no property rights and the slaves were sold and bought like the cattle in the markets. Emergence of coloni or share croppers was an important development.

Various religious sects of the Roman republic in Rome city and other parts of the empire continued to survive in the early phase of the late empire also. Jupiter and Mars were popular deities in Rome and elsewhere in the Empire. Even the Spirit of Rome and the statues of certain Roman emperors were being worshiped by the Romans. In most of cases the Roman state did not interference in the religious traditions of the common people and may be generally considered tolerant of religions. But the Roman state expected that the people of the empire should participate in the state religious celebrations. In the eastern part of the empire Judaism and later on Christianity became dominant religions. The Christianity spread to Western parts also at a fast pace. The followers of Christ faced a severe repression at the hands of the Roman state during the early phase of Christianity. But in the third and fourth century it was accepted by the state and became a popular religion of the inhabitants of Western Europe and eastern part of the empire. The emperor Constantine was the first Roman emperor who adopted the Christianity and by the end of the 4th century it became state religion of the Roman Empire. In fact the spread of Christianity was helped by the enthusiasm of general masses, the vast spread of the empire with a certain degree of political and social cohesion and network of roads.

10.8 EXERCISES

1) Discuss in brief army, the civil administration and judicial system in the late Roman Empire.
2) Write a note on economy of late Roman state.
3) What was the position of lower classes and slaves in the Roman Society?
4) Analyze the early religious sects in the Roman Empire.
5) Discuss the spread of the Christianity in the Roman Empire.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 11 THE ARAB WORLD

Structure

11.1 Introduction

11.2 The Arab World and its Environs Before the Advent of Islam

- 11.2.1 The Great Empires
- 11.2.2 The Arabian Peninsular

11.3 The Rise of Islam

- 11.3.1 The Prophet and His Message
- 11.3.2 The Foundation of the Islamic State
- 11.3.3 Changes in Society

11.4 The Rule of the First Four Caliphs

- 11.4.1 Abu Bakr 632 - 634 A.D.
- 11.4.2 Umar 634 - 644 A.D.
- 11.4.3 Usman 644 - 656 A.D.
- 11.4.4 Ali 656-661 A.D.

11.5 The Umayyad Caliphate

- 11.5.1 Muawiyyah and Dynastic Rule
- 11.5.2 The End of the Umayyads

11.6 The Abbasid Caliphate

11.7 Summary

11.8 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 10, we discussed the late Roman World and how by the 5th Century AD. the eastern Roman empire came to be known as Byzantine. Byzantine empire under the rule of Emperor Justinian (who ruled from 527 to 565) reached its height and included Greece, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Italy, Southern Spain and parts of near East, North Africa and Balkans.

During the hey days of the Byzantine Empire in the early 7th Century another major force was emerging in the neighbouring Arab World. This new force had its origin in the Saudi Arabia and drew inspiration from a new religion the Islam. During the whole of the 7th century large scale territorial expansion of Islamic state took place in and outside Arabia. They conquered Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iran (including Khurasan), and stretched from Spain to China. The Byzantine Empire lost Syria, Palestine and Egypt while the Sassanid Empire was completely overrun.

In this Unit, we will first familiarize you with the society, state and religion in Arabia and the region around it before the rise and spread of Islam. This will be followed by an account of the rise of Islam and foundation of the Islamic State. We will discuss how the advent of lslam contributed in transforming a tribal society and polity. After the death of Prophet Muhammad the institution of Caliph comes into existence. The Caliph was the head of lslamic State and was also vested with religious authority in the absence of a separate priesthood in Islam.

Besides the period of first four caliphs we will also discuss two major dynasties, following their rule, the Umayads and the Abbasid. Instead of a separate discussion on society, religion and state we propose to discuss it interwoven with the history of caliphates up to the Abbasids.

11.2 THE ARAB WORLD AND ITS ENVIRONS BEFORE THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

As already referred, the Islam was born in the region of Saudi Arabia. Before we move on to analyze the rise of Islam and emergence of Islamic state and society let us briefly examine the prevailing conditions in the region around Arab and Arabian peninsular.

Islam was born in a tribal and desert environment but it soon found ready acceptance in regions, which had been the cradle of civilizations for centuries (Egypt, the Fertile Crescent and Iran). We therefore have to study not only the conditions of the Arabian peninsular but also the areas where Islamic culture and institutions reached their fruitation. Islamic society not only inherited but also continued the traditions of the earlier societies, particularly in the area between the Nile and the Oxus. It was the inheritor of the traditions of the ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews and Persians. Islam has to be studied in the context of earlier religious traditions. Islamic civilizations while incorporating many new elements also included newer developments within the old traditions.

11.2.1 The Great Empires

In the sixth century, the area in which Islam was to spread was largely divided between two cultural and political powers: the Eastern Roman empire or the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople and the Sassanian Empire with its capital at Ctesiphon on the river Tigris. Ctesiphon was about forty miles from the ancient site of Babylon, very near to the modem city of Baghdad. In the other major cultural zones of the world, the Chinese empire was reunited in the end of the sixth century and there was a political and economic resurgence in the seventh century. In north India in the first half of the seventh century a major empire was formed under Harsha.

The old Roman Empire had been reorganized under a centralized political structure towards the end of the third century. The center of the empire had shifted to the Mediterranean basin. The Byzantine Empire included the Balkan and Anatolian peninsulars as well as Egypt and Syria. The emperor Constantine made Christianity, which itself had originated in the Fertile Crescent, the state religion. He shifted the capital from Rome to Constantinople (now called Istanbul). Constantine took an active interest in the religious affairs of his empire because various regional interpretations of Christianity challenged the imperial version. A close understanding between the Church and the State was worked out by Constantine and by the middle of the sixth century Caesaro popism i.e., the emperor combining political and religious power became the foundation of the state. This led to social stability as it did religious schisms, which acquired political overtones. Many of these movements of religious dissent accelerated the disruption of the state. Christians in Egypt, Syria and Iraq believed in different interpretations of Christianity than the one promulgated by the Byzantine emperor.

By the end of the sixth century the Egyptians and Syrians had began resenting being ruled by Constantinople. The Jewish minority in these areas, which was mostly involved in more mercantile activities, also faced severe religious persecution. These dissident political movements were supported by the Sassanian rulers who were the main rivals of the Byzantines.

The Sassanian Empire was spread over Iraq, Iran and over territories as far as the Indus. It was established in the first half of the third century and was more centralized than its predecessor, the Parthian empire. In the Sassanian Empire too, there was a close alliance between the state and religion. The Sassanians were Zoroastrians and their religion became the official dogma of the state. The holy text Avesta was also compiled during this time. The priestly class was co-opted into the state through employment. The religious schisms in the Sassanian Empire also had clear political dimensions but the rulers and the priests were able to suppress any dissent that disturbed social stability. The Sassanian administration was probably more organized than that of the Byzantines.

Powerful but shorter-lived Kingdoms had also risen in the Yemen in the southern part of the Arabian peninsular from as early as a thousand years before Christ. Blessed with a fertile soil and favorable climate, luxuriant vegetation abounded here in contrast to the rest of the peninsular. Frankincense, an expensive commodity in great demand in the Byzantine Empire because it was used in church ceremonies, was produced here. Its cultivation required specialized cultivation and harvesting. Rulers of these kingdoms, often priest kings, had organized an elaborate system of terracing and•irrigation. Its geographical position between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean also favored trade. Luxuries from India and the east reached the Mediterranean world and Europe from Yemen.

The prosperity of the Yemeni kingdoms did not last long for they fell victim to the struggle between the two great powers. The Byzantines, through their allies the Ethiopians, constantly pressurized Yemen and tried to disseminate Christianity here but many Yemenis chose Judaism as an act of defiance. In the middle of the sixth century the Ethiopians conquered South Arabia. In 597 A.D. the Persians retaliated by invading it. The breaking of the famous dam at Ma'rib in 570 was the real reason for the collapse of the kingdom and it indicated that the state was not in a position to maintain the crucial irrigation structure any longer. The dam had broken on two earlier occasions, in 450 and 542 A.D. but on each occasion the rulers had been in a position to manage the breach. In 570 A.D. the state was helpless in the face of this catastrophe.

The contribution of the south Arabians to future developments was in the patterns of trade they had developed through the desert to their north. They had involved the Bedouin of the deserts in their trade-network and given them an important economic activity, which supplemented their hazardous means of existence. The south Arabian trade had also led to the growth of trading centers like Mecca in Western Arabia.

11.2.2 The Arabian Peninsular

The Arabian peninsular was in close proximity to both the empires and was influenced by their fortunes. It was also a part of the cultural zone where monotheism had been established as the popular religious belief system through Judaism and Christianity, both religions of the Abrahamic tradition.

Both these religions had a prophetic tradition and both believed in life after death and that every individual's life had to be one of moral responsibility. These beliefs were embodied in one scripture for each of these religions. Monotheism also led to the idea of one righteous community and this made for easy alliance between religion and political power.

The conditions in the rest of the Arabian peninsular were different. This society was in a more primitive sense of development. It is interesting that the forces that were to change the areas surrounding the peninsular should have originated here. Anthropologists have suggested that relatively less specialized cultures are more prone to the "sudden leap forward" because their resistance to change is weaker.

North, West and Central Arabia were simple stretches of rock and sand with transient vegetation. In some areas there was water close to the surface and in these regions extensive agriculture was carried on but this cultivation was isolated.

The Tribal Society of the Region

Before 1000 B.C. nomadic people lived in this area with their domesticated Asses. Around 1100 B.C. the camel seems to have been domesticated with far reaching consequences. The camel was ideally suited to this area and it made it easy to deal with the desert. It could traverse great distances (about 160 kms. though a loaded camel could do only 40 kms in a day) and could survive in temperatures as high as 57 degrees Celsius. It could also keep going for eight days without drinking water. Loads that it could carry have been variously estimated as being 250-600 kgs. The camel was also an excellent source of milk and leather.

With their camels, the Bedouin became an independent political force, difficult to be controlled by settled populations. The camel nomads raided and exacted tribute from settled colonies. Bedouins living in proximity of strong empires became useful carriers of trade and an excellent source for soldiers. The camel nomads called themselves Arabs, a designation that they maintained, even after they had settled.

Bedouins often settled after they took a settled area around an oasis by force. Nomadic social organization continued to survive in these settlements. Families joined other families for economic and social reasons to form larger clans. Clans combined into larger units called the tribes.

There were distinctions between those settled around a source of water and engaged in agriculture and commerce, and the Bedouins who lived by stock breeding and were constantly on the move in search of pasture for their livestock. Though these groups were distinct in their lifestyles, they interacted continually. Their relationship was one of constant tension. The agriculturists and the merchants supplied the Bedouin with grain, dates and weapons. In return the nomads provided them animal products and livestock and also left them unmolested. If a permanent arrangement was worked out, they protected them from other tribes. The Bedouin also acted as escorts and guards for the caravans carrying merchandise between South Arabia and the West and between Iraq and Iran and East Africa.

For the nomad the tribe was all-important and the individual could not survive without it. Tribes traced a real or fictitious common ancestor and each tribe was sovereign and acknowledged no outside authority. The tribes were not static and there was a tendency for a tribe to break up when the unit became larger than was feasible. Tribes often formed alliances. Their basic economic activity was trading, herding or raiding other tribes or settled populations.

An individual got his identity, position and support from the tribe. Group solidarity ensured that an individual identified his welfare with that of the entire tribe. Retaliatory blood-feuds in which a tribe was obligated to seek revenge for harm done to any of its members maintained inter-tribal peace in the long run. At the head of a tribe was a Sayyid chosen from one of the leading clans for his wisdom, courage and generosity. His authority was mainly moral. All major decisions, for some of them might mean death for all the adult males, were taken collectively.

Muruwah or ‘manliness’ was the ideal of the Bedouins. It has defined it as “bravery in battle, patience in misfortune, persistence in revenge, protection of the weak and defiance of the strong”. The fact that the tribe was the most powerful communal organization meant that political unity was impossible in Arabia uritil Muhammad provided the supra-tribal ideal of the ummah or the 'community' based on Islam.

Rise of City of Mecca

Mecca where Muhammad was born and spent his formative years was a very special settlement. It was the unchallenged commercial and financial center of the peninsular. The town owed its prominent position to two factors: a) being a trade centre, and b) the location of the most popular religious sanctuary in the desert. The Ka’ba had become sanctuary of intra-tribal worship and was considered sacred to all Arabs. Mecca also had a fresh water spring.

Mecca was protected by a range of hills from the pirates in the Red Sea and was at the juncture of the north-south and east-west trade routes. The Sassanians controlled the land routes from northern India and China and the sea routes through the Persian Gulf from southern India and Ceylon. The Byzantine ruling elite needed many luxury goods from the east and the only route through which these goods could reach them was overland from southern Arabia. The southern Arabian kingdoms had flourished because of this trade and Mecca was crucial to it.

When the Yemeni kingdoms declined, the Meccan’s acquired control of this trade. The lengthy wars between the Sassanians and Byzantines had also made the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea routes unsafe. The result was the increasing importance of the trade through Mecca.

Mecca was established around the spring of Zamzam around 400 A.D. Originally its market must have worked on a barter system. By the end of the sixth century a full fledged market system had developed. The trade was enormous and involved goods from China, India and South Arabia and slaves

ignou THE PEOPLE’S UNIVERSITY

from east Africa. One authority has estimated that annual volume of trade with Syria approximated around 1,200,000 kgs of goods equivalent to 11,250 kgs of gold, and profits were seldom less than fifty per cent. A single caravan could comprise of as many as 2,500 camels and was often worth 2,250 kgs of gold. Many foreign currencies were in circulation in Mecca and a high degree of specialization in financial dealings had developed because the gold standard was used in Syria and Egypt and the silver in Iraq.

The tribe of the Quraysh, who controlled Mecca, had contributed much to the organization of Mecca's prosperity. They extracted a price for their neutrality between the two warring empires, played the role of brokers and controlled the predatory nomads. They created a system some times referred to as the 'Commonwealth of Mecca'.

This system linked the inhabitants of Mecca to the rest of the inhabitants of Arabia, both the nomadic and the settled. The credit for this is usually given to the Hashim, the great grandfather of Muhammad. He got charters from the surrounding kingdoms permitting Meccan merchants to frequent their territories with their merchandise. With these charters, the Quraysh controlled trade within the peninsular by coming to agreements with other tribes through whose territories of influence the caravans passed. Meccan merchants carried the goods of these tribes, claiming no share of the profits, in exchange for safety. Those tribes that wanted to be a part of the trading system but could not guarantee safety could do so on the payment of a tax. This money was used for the defence of the caravans and of Mecca from those tribes that did not respect the sanctity of the Ka'ba. Every tribe who entered into agreements with the Quraysh had to accept the inviolability of Mecca. No fighting could take place in Mecca and four months were fixed when tribes could not fight amongst themselves.

The Quraysh were also in control of the belief system that centered on the Ka'ba. An annual pilgrimage, the hajj, was a part of this. The Quraysh guaranteed the safety of all pilgrims. Even to these tribes that had their own deities, the Meccan shrine became increasingly significant. There had been thus a growing tendency towards the centralization of worship, something to which Muhammad would put a seal.

The clans who formed the Quraysh, met in an assembly of notables to make decisions. These decisions were non-binding in character. The Quraysh maintained their solidarity and thus managed to consolidate their hold over trade. However, by the end of the sixth century cracks within this system were appearing. Muhammad was able to comprehend these contradictions and to diffuse resulting tensions to complete the political unification of the peninsular.

Mecca once urbanized naturally drifted away from the ideals of tribal pastoralism. Yet it was dependent on the Bedouins for its survival and on outside sources for its food requirements. Its main suppliers of food were Egypt and Syria. As long as the caravan trade was under Meccan control there was no problems. But it did make the city very vulnerable.

Mecca had also reached the limits of its developments and could develop no further without becoming a part of a larger political µnit and a part of a more realistic geo-political entity. Those in control in Mecca were reluctant to initiate change. They had vested interest in the system and feared the loss of power. Muhammad thus had to save Mecca's prosperity from its main beneficiaries.

By the early seventh century the alliance with the tribes was also under strain and this was due to the increase in Mecca's prosperity and the increasing disparities between the settled populations and the Bedouins. The nomads resented the increase in trade and market towns, accompanied by the strengthening of the sedentary populations. Within the Quraysh some clans began to develop monopolistic tendencies, which were resented by the weaker clans. These tensions were noticed by the more foresighted among the Meccans. Muhammad was one of those who saw the dangers.

The mercantile economy had led to the concentration of wealth in individual hands. This was not accompanied by a parallel prosperity among the nomads. By the very nature of his existence, the nomad could only possess that many goods as his camels could carry. Some tribes had had to give up plundering, one of their main economic sources for the sake of Meccan trade of which they were getting only a small share.

The tensions within the social fabric of Mecca were equally serious. The growth of individualism was wholly at variance with the traditional concept of group solidarity. Individual rather than collective initiatives became frequent. The successful merchant, if a part of a powerful clan, was less inclined to share his profits with others of his tribe. Traditional tribal values were loosing their relevance and Muruwa as a system of morality was declining. The clan w s replacing the tribe as the main unit of social life. This was later weakened by patron-client relationships.

Accumulation of wealth in a few hands led to social stratification. The powerful men in Mecca got richer by exploiting two contradictory elements: the conditions of a free market and the power that they had as leaders of their clans. They exploited their position of leadership but did not fulfill their obligations. Instead of sharing the fruits of trade, they kept the best shares for themselves and the rest of the Meccans obtained shares that did not yield as much. Orphans, and the weak could no longer depend on the leaders' protection and were left to the mercy of market forces. This explains why Muhammad's earliest followers were either members of the weaker clans or junior members of the most powerful families and thus closely related to Muhammad's most serious opponents.

The Hunufa expressed the spiritual anguish of an unjust society, the seekers of a new monotheistic faith. Muhammad was one of these.

11.3 THE RISE OF ISLAM

Muhammad the Prophet of Islam established the Islamic state in the desert oasis of Medina. Islam was originally the answer to the problems facing a tribal society in transition but it came to influence the cultural and political developments in areas with highly developed cultural and political traditions of their own.

11.3.1 The Prophet and His Message

Muhammad's mission, first unconscious and then deliberate, was to unify the various sections of the Arab society according to a new principle of solidarity, Islam.

Muhammad was born after his father's death and lost his mother soon after. He was first looked after by his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib and later by the next leader of the clan, his uncle Abu Talib. His clan had once been the dominant one but it has lost that position.

Growing up as an orphan and responsibility of his relatives must have impressed upon him the vulnerability of the individual. Born posthumously he did not inherit, according to the Arab customs, his father's property. As a young man Muhammad traveled with the caravans where he interacted with many who were spiritually inclined including Jews and Christian monks. At twenty-five he married Khadija, a much older widow, whose husband had been merchant and started trading on her behalf.

Around 610 A.D. at the age of forty, he began to speak of his mystic experiences. His original religious experience which occurred while he was alone and meditating, was a deep personal awareness of a mighty and merciful God and before whom man's only response could be of worship and gratitude. Man had to submit himself totally to his Lorcl who would judge him one day. This concept of individual responsibility was quite contrary to the belief of his times. Personal responsibility was an alien concept both to the wealthy merchants who had forgotten their social obligations and to those whom glory lay in the power of their tribes. Underlying Muhammad's conception of God was a weak tradition of monotheism which saw the worship of Allah as the worship of the one God of Abraham and which owed something to Judean Christian influences.

The revelations convinced Muhammad that he had been chosen as the Rasul Allah, the messenger of God, the instrument through whom God wanted to communicate his message to the people.

He continued receiving these messages till his death. These revelations initially dealt with God's unity, the obligation to give alms and to help the poor and the destitute and also the insistence on the dreadful judgment, which awaited those who hoarded wealth and exploited the weak.

Khadija, his wife, was one of the first to accept his divine mission. So was Ali his cousin. Gradually he attracted around him a small group of followers who shared his ideals. Muhammad's message did not condemn commerce, only unfair practices and the social responsibility of the wealthy. He sought to establish a new sense of community based on the realization of the equality of men before their creator.

As has been stated earlier his followers in the early stages largely came from the members of the weaker clans, the junior members of the powerful clans, women and outsiders - slaves or client. Initially Muhammad and his followers were ignored but soon opposition began but his clan and its leader Abu Talib protected Muhammad. Abu Talib was not a Muslim but he must have shared the anti-monopolistic strain in Muhammad's teachings. In 615/16 Muhammad decided to send some of his followers to Ethiopia. It could have been to protect the weak (i.e., those — like the slaves — who did not have clan backing to protect them) members among the Muslims from persecutions. The clans continued to exert pressure on Abu Talib and an economic and marital boycott was also instituted against the clan of Hashimites but it failed and Muhammad succeeded in converting the important Umar ibn al Khattab, till now a major opponent of the new religion.

The real crisis for Muhammad came in 619 A.D. when Abu Talib died and was succeeded by Abu Wahab who withdrew clan protection from Muhammad. The Prophet was therefore forced to look for a new home for himself and his community and began negotiations with the various tribes that came to Mecca for hajj but he met with little success.

Muhammad realized that despite the decline in tribal solidarity, it was not possible to survive without the support of a tribe or a clan. He realized that if Islam had to survive, it had to harness the political and economic power of a major tribe or an alliance of tribes. This is why the migration (Hijrah) to the oasis of Yathrib (later renamed Medina) is seen as a turning point in the history of Islam.

The Meccans found Muhammad intolerable because they feared that it might disrupt their system of trade, which was so closely linked, with the sanctity of the Ka’11F• They also resented the attack on their whole way of life, particularly Muhamriiad’s attack on usury. They saw Muhammad as a political threat because he claimed to derive his authority straight from God.

In 620 A.D. Muhammad had begun a dialogue with a delegation from Medina and in 622 after prolonged negotiation, they pledged physical protection to Muhammad and his followers. Thereafter, Muslims began to emigrate to Medina. Muhammad left secretly because he feared that the Meccans might stop him from leaving by assassinating him. He reached Medina on the twenty fourth of September 622. The importance of this event is symbolised by the decision to begin the Islamic calendar from this year. The calendar came to be known as the hijri calendar.

11.3.2 The Foundation of the Islamic State

A group of Jews had settled around the oasis at Medina a prosperous date growing center. Its prosperity encouraged local tribes to invade and occupy it. It was not a compact commercial centre like Mecca, but an oasis inhabited by different tribal groups and a number of smaller but influential Jewish groups. The laws of the dessert exacted a life for life. A tribe maintained and defended itself by force and this was unsuitable in a situation where a number of warring groups lived in close physical proximity of each other. Since it was neither a trading centre nor a religious one, there had been little incentive to work out a system of communal peace. The result was constant inter-group warfare and killing. In 618 A.D. there had been a fight with a great deal of slaughter and the conflicts over blood money or revenge had still not been worked out. Muhammad with his new vision of a community was invited to fill the traditional role of arbitrator or judge (hakam) between the various groups. Thus to his religious role as a Prophet was added a political role.

We are fortunate that the text, often referred to as the ‘Constitution of Medina,’ has survived. This charter regulated the relationships in the new political entity that had come into being at Medina. It explicitly states at the outset that “they are single community” comprising of two major groups: the Muslims emigrants (muhajirun), the hosts in Medina, (the ansar.) There were also the Jews who were protected in their religion. Muhammad’s position as the undisputed leader of the muhajirun was accepted but his position vis a vis the others was one of moral authority. He was accepted as an arbitrator (hakam) but had no powers to enforce his judgments.

ignou THE PEOPLE’S UNIVERSITY

In Medina the Muslims couldn't suddenly become agriculturists. They were a trading community and competition with Mecca was inevitable. Muhammad challenged the Meccan trade system by harassing caravans going to or coming back from Syria with disregard for 'sacred months' decided by the Meccans. In 624 a large caravan going to Mecca was attacked. The Muslims were successful and gained a large booty. Muhammad kept one-fifth of it as leader to be spent on community affairs. The rest was distributed among the Muslims. Muhammad's prestige received a tremendous boost when he proved himself a successful military leader. It was also seen as a confirmation of the truth of his mission. More Arabs began to convert.

Dissensions appeared between the Muslims and Jews in Medina. Originally, Muhammad had been reconciliatory towards the Jews. Islam recognized Abraham, Moses and Jesus as prophets sent by Allah. The Jews were monotheists like the Muslims and the Muslims faced Jerusalem when they prayed. The Jews however did not accept Muhammad's claims. Some Jewish tribes also began to conspire with the Meccans. A clan of the Jews was expelled with their families but without their weapons. Muhammad also ordered the Muslims to now face the Ka'ba when they prayed.

In 625 A. D. a major attack was launched by the Meccans to destroy the Muslims. Muhammad faced them with a small force at Uhud. Seventy-five Muslims were killed but the Meccans failed to destroy the young community.

The desperate Meccan's collected a much larger force. In order to blunt the charge of the cavalry, the Muslims dug a ditch to protect themselves. This has therefore come to be known as the "battle of the ditch." The Meccans failed again. Following this, the last group of Jews left in Mecca who had shown signs of treachery during the siege were massacred.

Muhammad's success attracted more tribes to him. The Meccans realized that they would have to reach a compromise with the Muslims. Muhammad himself was not interested in destroying the Meccan trade and must have realized that any prolongation of conflict would destroy the trade throughout the peninsula. He made a gesture towards the Meccans by trying to go to the Ka'ba to perform Hajj. Finally a truce was arranged and Mecca surrendered without a fight in 630A.D.

Once he had the control of Mecca more tribes joined him. Muhammad was careful not to harm Mecca. He had earlier treated those whom he had captured in the various encounters with Mecca very leniently. He had also shown that his religion held Ka'ba in greatest of esteem. Not all the elements of the old religion were discarded. Many rituals of pre-Islamic days were incorporated into the new religion. When Mecca fell, the people were graciously accepted into the *ummah*.

Muhammad's consolidation of power shows how well Muhammad understood political realities. Often these superseded his religious mission. In the alliances made during the early period he had not insisted that his allies become Muslims. It was after the fall of Mecca that he started insisting on conversions. But he did not cease to make alliances with tribes, particularly the distant and the powerful ones, with no religious strings attached.

Theoretically Muhammad's position never changed for there was no new constitution or charter. However, in real terms it altered radically. From being an arbitrator with undefined powers, he became, after the conquest of Mecca, an undisputed leader. He came to possess supreme authority in the ummah. People were deputed to act on his behalf as personal agents of the Prophet. It becomes difficult to distinguish between his political and religious roles. His commands, even when they concerned purely secular matters, came as revelations from God. Most of the people of Medina, where he returned after the conquest of Mecca, professed Islam and the few Christians and Jews who remained were treated as Zimmis or protected people.

11.3.3 Changes in Society

The *ummah* of Medina was a heterogeneous group united no longer by blood ties but by their religion and acted as a large tribe with Muhammad as their chief. Other tribes joined this community by either becoming Muslims or in some cases by entering into a treaty relationship according to which they paid a certain tax in return for protection. The last years of the Prophet's life saw a tremendous increase in the numbers of Muslims.

What were the bonds that united this new political society? Many western scholars have been sceptical of the religious motivation of the mass of converts. This contrasts with the over simplified and idealistic explanation of Muslim writers who tended to represent the process in completely religious terms. Did the tribes joining Muhammad's system accept his religious authority along with his political one? It would be a mistake to pose this question because it is unlikely that the Arab tribes appreciated this dichotomy. They realized that in Islam cultural, economic and religious concerns were completely intermixed. Muhammad also presented a religion, revealed to the Arabs in their own language and particularly suited to their needs. He did not insist on conversions and the Meccans were not forced to convert. Yet, many did.

It would be correct to say that they would have been more conscious of Muhammad than of his mission and that their response was to the Prophet rather than to the teachings of lslam. Most of them must have been incapable of making a distinction between the temporal and the secular and once they realized that the future lay with the Muslims there was no reason for them to stop short of complete allegiance. The efforts to distinguish between the secular and religious motive for joining Islam are therefore futile. The religious revelations embodied in the Quran are the core of Islam but the message from 622 AD. onwards was one of an expanding and aggressive political power. Islam not only responded to the spiritual needs of the religious but also suited many of the political, cultural, economic, social and psychological needs of the Arabs. It was a new version of the old idea of group solidarity.

Muhammad was truly convinced of his mission to unite the Arabs in true worship of Allah. This mission could not have been accomplished in a vacuum. To say that he was a successful political leader is not to deny his religious charisma. The nature and character of his authority grew and changed with time.

He was a visionary and towards the end of his life, having established peace in Arabia, he realized that the young community would not survive unless a new outlet was found for their energies. No effective political unification of the Arabs had been possible because they lived off each other. An external target had to be found. So among his final acts had been attempts to secure the roads to Iraq and Syria.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

11.4 THE RULE OF THE FIRST FOUR CALIPHS

Following the death of the Prophet the first divisions appeared among the Muslims. No one could succeed Muhammad as a Prophet. Muhammad had designated no political successor though someone to guide the temporal affairs of the community was clearly needed. (This need was met through the appointment of his successors who came to be called Caliphs. (Arabic world meaning successor). The Caliphs had both spiritual and temporal authority. (Since there was no priesthood in Islam). However, the Caliphs had no authority in the matters of the religious doctrine which was available to the prophet. There were three main groups supporting rival contenders as successor of which Ali and Abu Bakr were the most important. Umar, who was to become the second caliph, was instrumental in getting a consensus in favour of Abu Bakr a senior companion of the Prophet. The decision over succession• was taken according to tribal custom where a sayyid was chosen, not according to any formal democratic process but through a process of discussion and consent. The first four Caliphs had all been closely associated with Muhammad and are referred to the 'Rightly Guided' ones.

11.4.1 Abu Bakr 632-34 A.D.

Abu Bakr, as the first Caliph was mainly concerned with what have come to be known as wars against apostasy. Many of the tribes who had joined Muhammad, particularly those far from Medina felt that their alliance would be of little use now that Muhammad was dead. Abu Bakr had to reassert the authority of the ummah. There were six main areas of conflict. Interestingly, four of these were led by men claiming to be Prophets. Fighting occurred in many parts of Arabia and Abu Bakr succeeded in establishing the leadership of Medina all over the peninsula. Though these wars are referred to as ridda (apostasy) this was not always true. Many of the tribes who Abu Bakr fought had never accepted Islam. Muslim expansion had clearly begun. Outside the peninsular, in 633 A.D. a fortified Sassanian town near the Euphrates was taken and a Byzantine force was defeated in Southern Syria.

11.4.2 Umar 634-44 A.D.

It was during Umar's caliphate that most of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and much of Iran was conquered. It was also under him that the patterns of the government and finance of the Islamic regime were first worked out.

A man of tremendous energy, he was at first a violent opponent of Muhammad at Mecca, but once converted had become his great champion. His succession was uncontested. Islamic tradition however, has magnified his contribution attributing to him a series of political economic and social institutions, which were developed over succeeding generations. Nevertheless his contributions were significant.

The list of the victories of the Arab armies under him is impressive. The Byzantine army was crushed in 636 A.D. Damascus and most of Syria was taken. In 637 A.D. a major Sassanian army was defeated and their capital fell. The Arab armies got unimaginable wealth as booty from the sack of this city. In 638 A.D. Jerusalem was taken. In 639 Egypt was invaded and by 640 A.D. Byzantine power in Syria was wiped out. In 641 Mosul in Iraq fell and in 642 the port city of Alexandria in Egypt was conquered.

Umar consolidated these new territorial gains administratively. He appointed governors (amirs) to administer the newly acquired provinces. Invading troops were not allowed to settle on lands or own it and the original cultivators were left in the possession of their lands on the payment of tribute. People of the conquered lands continued to live and work as before. The invasions had wiped out the landholding allies of the former regimes who had been passing on their share of the tax burden on to the cultivators as well as extracting their share from the total revenues. With their disappearance, the taxation became lighter and the cultivator welcomed the new regime. Umar ordered that movable booty belonged in part to the soldiers but that land belonging to the former rulers and the taxes belonged to the entire community. Previous administrators were reemployed and the conquered people were allowed to live according to their own laws.

Umar's policy made it easy to establish control over the newly conquered areas. He then used them as a base to push further. He did not let his armies settle on the land for that would have deprived the conquests of its momentum. The economic and social structure of these lands was left undisturbed and economic activity continued without interruption. The religion of the subject people was also left alone. There was no push for conversion. The differing religious communities were given a status of zimmis who had to pay kharaj (land tax) and poll tax (jaziya) but did not have to fight for the state.

Except in Iran the armies were quartered away from urban centres. Special garrison cities were built for them. This was done to ensure better control over the tribal units of which the armies were formed. It also made the Islamisation of the army easier. These garrisons developed into full-fledged cultural and commercial centers like Basrah and Kufah in Iraq and Fustat (later Cairo) in Egypt and became focal points of Islamic civilization in the early centuries. Almost all the Islamic historians and jurists worked in cities and Islamic law grew out of the custom of these cities.

Umar also created a diwan, a register of those who were to be supported by the state. It included all the Arab Muslims and was a way of paying the troops and sharing the wealth of the empire with the non-combatants. At the top of the list were the wives of the Prophet and it included all residents of Mecca and Medina. It was also Umar who decided to use the Islamic calendar for administrative work.

Two powerful empires had succumbed in the face of the assault of the Arab tribes, now submerged in the larger unity of lslam. The might of the Byzantine and Sassanian turned out to be a facade. It has been said that they were riddled with social and religious discontent. In the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire there was a nationalistic resentment against the domination of the Greeks. This resentment had been heightened by the religious intolerance of the official church. Some were unhappy with contentious debates over incomprehensible subtleties and intricacies might also have welcomed the simplicity of the new monotheistic faith. The people welcomed the Arabs as people who delivered them from oppressive Greek taxation. The new rulers were no strangers either because they had been familiar as merchants. Settlements of Arabic speakers had settled in the border areas of these empires.

The situation was similar in the Sassanian lands though there was some nationalistic opposition to the Arabs in the heartland of Iran. But the masses, burdened with the responsibility of paying for a large state and its ever enlarging apparatuses would hardly have been displeased with the defeat of their oppressors.

11.4.3 Usman 644 - 656 A.D.

On his death bed Umar nominated a council of six to select his successor. Usman was chosen by the council as the caliph. In his reign expansions continued eastwards into Iran and westwards from Egypt. The text of the Quran was standardized for the sake of unity. It was also during his period that the enormous enrichment of some families of Mecca and Medina led to jealousies and discontent and the first serious divisions occurred in Islam.

Usman did not break from the policies of Umar of building a strong centralized authority. To ensure loyalty of his governors and administrators he began appointing members of his clan, the Umayyah, to important posts. This was to lead to charges of nepotism. One such appointment was of Muawiyyah as Governor at Damascus. This meant that much power came into the hand of some Meccan families who had been one of the most hostile opponents of Muhammad. Umar's restrictions on Arabs owning property outside of the peninsular were also disregarded and some privileged families were allowed to build up large estates. Usman did not have Umar's administrative and political capabilities.

Injustice, improvisations in administration and financial irregularities appeared. This was exploited by the opponents of Usman including supporters of Ali who wished to see him as Caliph since the death of Muhammad. However, one cannot deny that it was Ali's religious idealism which was shocked at the way in which Muhammad's legacy was being abused for the advantage of a few. Dissatisfaction also grew among the various tribal groups who felt they were being denied their rightful share. The last straw was when payment of pensions became irregular. Usman was murdered by group of Muslims in Medina.

11.4.4 Ali 656-61 A.D.

Ali was a cousin and the son in law of the Prophet. After the murder of Usman he was recognized as caliph everywhere except in Syria where Muawiyyah refused to accept his authority. Ali's reign witnessed the first civil war among Muslims.

Ali had many of the qualities necessary to be a successor of the Muhammad. He was among the first to convert and he had been closely associated with Muhammad. He was brave, pious and loyal to the ideals of the Quran. However, some analysts feel that he lacked qualities that were necessary for political success expediency, foresight and tenacity. When he finally acquired the caliphate its sacrosanct character had been tainted by Usman's murder.

Aisha, a wife of the Prophet, challenged Ali's authority. Accusing Ali for not avenging Usman's murder she joined Ali's former associates in open rebellion and was actually present in the battlefield at the time of confrontation between the two forces. Ali defeated the insurgents at Basrah and from then on abandoned Medina as the Caliphal capital for Kufah. This was the most serious schism within the community till now. Many companions of the Prophet were on opposing sides and many early Muslims were killed.

Muawiyyah also refused to pay tribute to Ali and the two armies confronted each other at Siffin. Ali let himself be out maneuvered by Muawiyyah into accepting arbitration. The arbitrators ruled against Ali and Ali refused to accept their decision. Ali's position was weakened by a connected development. A large group of his pious followers seceded from his cause because they felt that he had undermined the Caliphal authority by accepting arbitration by mere men. Known as the Kharajites, they were religious idealists who were outraged by this gesture of political expediency on the part of Ali. Before dealing with Muawiyyah, Ali decided to crush the Kharajite, which he did ruthlessly. This killing of pious Muslims led to further desertions from Ali's ranks. He had to reconcile himself on the independence of Muawiyyah in Syria and his encroachments into Egypt. A Kharajite assassinated Ali.

Muawiyyah was now free to assert his authority and this was to lead to the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate.

11.5 THE UMAYYAD CALIPHATE

Many historians, both the early Arab and modern, see the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate as an abandoning of the original ideals of Islam as a theocratic community and its replacement by secular kingship. Implied is the assumption that there was an explicitly stated Islamic ideal with regards to social and political organization, which Muawiyyah abandoned when he established his family as the rulers of an Arab dynasty.

To the contrary, there was no clearly worked out theory of caliphate. The first three caliphs had been chosen by differing methods. Their legitimacy lay in the acceptance of their authority by the families in Medina as well as Muslims elsewhere. The first four Caliphs were all a part of the tribe of Quraysh, but this was no concession to the special lights of that tribe. What was crucial was that they were able to maintain the unity of the expanding empire through effective centralized control.

The political unity of the Muslims provided by the Umayyads made it possible for Muslims to dwell on and elaborate upon the inner meanings of the Quran and it was the stability of the Islamic state that made it possible f'or this to be disseminated among Muslims over a span of several generations. Barring the core teachings of the Quran Islamic ideals developed over a period of time. Spread over centuries and across the world, Islamic traditions reflect their own peculiar environment and the relationships they formed with other traditions around them.

11.5.1 Muawiyyah and Dynastic Rule

Muawiyyah (661-80) proclaimed himself caliph at Damascus. The centralized power of the Muslim state, which had been established by Umar and seriously challenged during the caliphate of Ali, was restored. Muawiyyah was less dependent on the approval of the Holy cities of Mecca and Medina. His Syrian troops and revenue gave him the necessary power to assert his authority. Arabs in general supported him too because they feared dissidence and political disunity. Muawiyyah ruthlessly suppressed political defiance for the unity of Islam.

Khurasan was reconquered and many new garrison towns were established to maintain the exclusivity of the Arab governing class. Muslim armies penetrated further into eastern Iran and into the Oxus valley. Constantinople was besieged unsuccessfully and North Africa was conquered as for as Algeria. Muawiyyah was an efficient administrator and he continued the policy of discouraging conversion.

Muawiyyah functioned as an autocratic monarch. Kingship as an ideal was abhorrent to the Arabs and therefore Muslim rulers continued to refer to themselves as Caliphs (viceroys of the Prophet.) However, Muawiyyah was conscious of the damage that conflicts over succession could inflict on the Islamic state. He therefore declared his son Yazid as his successor.

Yazid was too preoccupied with challenges to his authority to keep up the momentum of expansion. The people of Medina refused to accept the principle of dynastic succession. The supporters of Ali (Shia-i-Ali) at Kufah also encouraged Husayn, Ali's son and a grandson of the Prophet, to stake his claim to the caliphate. Husayn could muster a tiny force and refused to surrender when confronted with Yazid's superior might and given the chance to retreat. He and his followers were massacred at Karbala in 680.

The emotional impact of the killing of a kin of the Prophet was tremendous. The Arabian peninsular rose in revolt. Ibn al Zubayr emerged as the leader of the resistance against Yazid and he proclaimed himself caliph at Mecca. But 1 the reality of his authority was limited. Various dissident groups were active. The Kharajite movement established a short-lived egalitarian and puritanical regime in central Arabia in 684. The Shia (party) of Ali also became active in Kufah and they gave the non-Arab converts to Islam (mawalis) an equal right in booty. Ibn al Zubayr suppressed this regime. The Berbers of North Africa rebelled against the Umayyads.

The authority of the Umayyads was reasserted by Marwan (683-85), a cousin of Muawiyyah. His son Abd al Malik (685-705) defeated the Medinan challenge and in the process the Ka'ba was damaged.

Under Abd al Malik centralized caliphal authority was exerted once again. He appointed al Hallaj ibn Yusuf, a vigorous administrator, to rule over the eastern provinces. Hallaj increased investment into the irrigation of the Sawad in Iraq and encouraged economic development. He ruled the area firmly and suppressed all dissidence.

The political unity of Islam continued to be the ideal of Abd-al Malik. Uniformity in the reciting of the Quran was enforced. New coinage with Islamic inscriptions was introduced. The Dome of the Rock, the first major Islamic monument was completed in Jerusalem, the city most sacred to the Jews and the Christians. Judges (qazis) were appointed to various garrison cities to settle disputes among the Muslims. Islam continued to be considered an Arab religion and conversions were discouraged.

In the reign of al Walid (705-715) the areas, which had been lost during the last civil wars, were recovered. Further expansion was made in the west, where the Berbers, tribes of North Africa who had converted en masse to Islam were used to conquer Spain. The Arabs gave it the name al-Andalusia (the land of the Vandals). The Moorish culture, a combination of Arab-Berber-Spanish elements, evolved here.

In the east Muslim armies penetrated into Sindh where the Buddhist mercantile classes seem to have converted to Islam. Expansion also continued into central Asia till the caliphate came to share a boundary with China.

Political and administrative unity in the empire was successfully imposed during this period. Governors were appointed by the centre and Arabic was now used as the administrative language. The Arabs were transformed from an army of occupation into a ruling class.

The caliphal state had succeeded in its centralising efforts because it had taken pains to directly control the economic resources of the empire. It made no concessions to the displaced privileged aristocrats of the former regimes. It was thus able to enforce a more equitable taxation system, which was welcomed by the people atlarge. The pursuit of an equitable tax policy also led to a tax on the individual the poll tax (Jaziya). The earlier regimes had imposed a poll tax too but they had exempted the powerful. Now only the Arabs were exempt. Others could escape it by conversion and thus attachment to all Arab tribe as a client (mawali). The non-Muslims (and by implication non-Arabs,) were given the status of *Zimmis* who paid a poll tax but did not have to fight for the state.

11.5.2 The End of the Umayyads

The economic needs of the state continued to grow, as did the pressure on the peasantry. Tensions appeared as Arabs started acquiring lands and began to develop into a class of privileged intermediaries between the producers and the state. It had been easy to rule the Arabs while they were secluded in garrison cities away from the subject population. Non-Arabs began migrating to the flourishing cities and becoming Muslims and the segregation between the Arabs and non-Arabs began to blur.

The garrison towns began to lo e their military character. The growing wealth of these cities was an incentive to commerce. Commercial activity became as lucrative as war booty and there appeared an increasing reluctance to be a part of military campaigns. In short, the conquering Arabs were turning into civilians and the social and economic problems of the civilians were beginning to touch them. The garrison towns now played a role contrary to the original one assigned to them. From instruments of segregation they now became centers of assimilation.

The increase in the number of conversions also led to serious repercussions. The mawalis began resenting their status as second-class citizens and demanded that being Muslim should be considered more important than being an Arab in an Islamic state. This resentment was successfully exploited by the opponents of the regime.

During al Waiid's reign religious criticism of the Umyyads by the Muslims of Arabia also increased. The adoption of the ostentatious culture and luxurious life styles of the former Byzantine ruling classes by the Arab elite was resented by those who felt that the Islamic state should be setting standards more in keeping with Islamic ideals and principles.

These critics got further ammunition in the reign of Sulayman (715-717), a sadistic and pleasure loving caliph. His reign also saw the accentuation of the tribal conflicts now crystallizing around the two main rival provinces. By favoring the Syrian based group he forced the groups based in Iran and the eastern parts of the empire to unite in their opposition. The Shias, the most vociferous critics of the Umayyads, had their base in Iraq. The effective and often harsh suppression of dissent by Abd-al Malik's lieutenant Hallaj had left behind a history of bitterness.

By the time of Umar II (717-20,) the resources at the command of the state were clearly depleted. His failed attempts to take Constantinople cost a lot of wealth, manpower and caliphal prestige. He tried to deal with the growing religious criticism of the Umayyads through piety and reconciliation. The Medinan families were re-granted a special status. Attempts were made to reconcile the Shiites and the Kharajite opponents. Church lands in Egypt were exempted from taxation and excessive and illegal taxes were abolished while those that had already been collected were reimbursed. He also found effective and honest governors for the provinces. He tried reducing the discontent in Iraq by removing the Syrian troops and he gave the provinces more control over their revenues.

Umar II reversed the established policy and encouraged the zimmis to convert and thus enlarged the governing class. He tried to use Islam as an ideology to unify the empire by applying its principles uniformly to all the Muslims. This meant instituting a discriminatory policy against those who did not convert. The Arab’s had paid one-tenth tithe on their land while the non-Muslims had to pay the much larger Kharaj. The Muslims also had to pay the Zakat (legal alms) and the non-Muslims paid jaziya. With Muslims acquiring land and non-Muslim cultivators converting, state collections dropped. Al Hallaj had insisted that all the original kharaji lands would continue to pay the higher rate irrespective of the religion of the cultivators. The rich Arabs who had acquired estates in occupied lands resented this. Any reversal to the former inequitable laws would have led to further resentment among the growing number of non Arab Muslims. Umar II worked out a compromise whereby lands acquired by Muslims or those lands whose owners converted after the year 100 A.H. (Hijri) would have to pay kharaj and would no longer be exempted.

Umar II was followed by the dissolute Yazid II (720-724). Under Hisham (724-743) strong rule was restored once again. Taxation was increased to meet the needs of the state. The Umayyad aristocracy was unwilling to give up either their privileges or the large subsidies they received from the state. The state also made extensive efforts to increase its income by investing in the irrigation system — the cleaning of disused canals and the digging of new ones. He overhauled the tax gathering system by enlarging the bureaucracy. His harsh fiscal policies led to popular discontent. He was also an autocrat. Resentment in Iraq against the rule of Syria rose again. The Shiite arose in rebellion but was suppressed.

The need for resources also saw attempts at expansion. In 738 Abd al Rahman the governor of Spain sacked Bordeaux and almost reached Paris. The Berbers who had provided the manpower for the expansion in this area and who had all converted to Islam resented the inferior status that the Arabs assigned them. They claimed that they were given the semi-arid lands. Between 734 and 742 this province was in rebellion which for all practical purposes halted any further expansion in this direction.

A succession of weak and dissolute rulers followed. Al Walid II (743-44) was irreligious and debauched. In order to survive he played one tribal faction against the other. He was murdered by his kinsmen and was followed by Yazid III who ruled only for a year. Factional fights among the governing class came out into the open. He was also forced to take the disastrous step of reducing the salary of the soldiers. Umayyad amirs started levying illegal tributes over the areas they were appointed and the power of the state was further crippled.

Trouble for the Umayyads continued under their last ruler Marwan II (744-50) who acquired power at the age of sixty. Popular discontent spread to all provinces. Serious rebellions occurred in Syria. The Kharajites rebelled in Iraq. Shiite propagandists took advantage of the growing unrest. Their propaganda found particular success in Khurasan where the process of assimilation had taken a different shape than the rest of the empire. The Arab troops here had not been quartered in garrison town but were allowed to spread out among the local population. Here the former feudal lords, the *dihqans* had not been replaced but made into allies by the state. An alliance was therefore formed between the peasants, the Arabs and the *dihqans*.

The various dissident groups found leadership in the Abbasids, descendants of Abbas, a cousin of Muhammad. The Shias rallied behind them in their opposition to the Utnayyads. Abu Muslim, a former slave, carried on effective propaganda on behalf of the house of Abbas in the name of Muhammad whose family had suffered at the hands of the Umayyad 'usurper'. Under black banners representing mourning for the martyrs the Abbasids gathered support particularly in Iran. Abu Muslim defeated Marwan II in 750 and the Abbasid Abu'l Abbas was proclaimed as the first Caliph of the Abbasids with the new name al-Saffah.

11.6 THE ABBASID CALIPHATE

The Abbasids had come to power espousing many popular causes particularly the claims of the Shias. However, once in power, it was clear that their commitment to them was not very deep and they continued to treat the caliphate as an absolute monarchy. The Shias, in their religious idealism were looking for a rightly guided Imam, who would lead through divine guidance. This guidance, they believed could only come from someone who came from the family of Muhammad. They were to be disappointed in the Abbasids.

Abbasid power was based on the military support of their Khurasani soldiers. They asserted their authority by restoring stability and worked out various compromises with the groups who had opposed the Umayyads.

The Abbasids built the city of Baghdad and made it their capital. This indicated that the predominance of Syria in the affairs of the Caliphate was ending. Under the Abbasids no province, barring perhaps Syria, was discriminated against. The Abbasids also tried to remove the differences between the Arabs and the new Muslims. They defused the opposition from religious elements by appointing their learned critics to represent the legal system and by patronizing the development of Islamic learning, jurisprudence and theology. They widened the base of their power by introducing non-Arabs into the ruling class. To hold this class together they encouraged the development of a court oriented high culture. They also allowed the ulama to work towards evolving comprehensive cultural traditions like law (shariah), jurisprudence (fiqh) and philosophy (falsafa) for the rest of the Muslims.

The Caliphs started building up autocratic traditions more in keeping with their great Iranian predecessors the Sassanians. This was symbolically indicated by their decision to build their capital near Ctesiphon. They tried to incorporate the mystic aura of divine glory that the Sassanian rulers had assumed into their political behaviour by assuming titles like the shadow of God on earth. The Caliphs became more and more unapproachable with the courtiers forming an effective cocoon around them. Rituals like the kissing the ground before the caliphs were introduced. The caliph could also dispense summary and unchallenged justice. The worst hit were those closest to the seat of power and this was an effective way of dealing with the troublesome elements within the nobility. The Umayyads had moved further towards building up an absolutist state.

Al-Saffah (750-54), the first Abbasid caliph, had every member of the Umayyad family that he could find, slaughtered. He was succeeded by his brother al Mansur (754-75) who had every Shia leader that he considered dangerous, executed. It was an assertion that the caliphate would not compromise its power by recognizing the claims of any group as being privileged. An efficient system of espionage was created. Spies kept track of all sources of potential trouble. The financial affairs of the empire were organized under the supervision of one trusted aide. This office was to soon become permanent in the form of the Wazir, the all-powerful minister. Heavy investment in Iraq was continued. Trade was encouraged by the sheer expanse of territory included into one political boundary. Baghdad was on major land and river (through Tigris and Euphrates) trade routes. Baghdad was different from the early Islamic capital in that it was not organized on tribal basis. It soon became the cultural and economic centre of the Caliphate. During his reign Spain broke away and an independent Umayyad Caliphate was established there.

Al Mansur was succeeded by his son al Mahdi (755-85). He improved the financial organization of the state and made an attempt to reconcile the Shia opposition to the Abbasids by making peace with the more moderate among them. He faced another threat, this time from Manichaeism. This populist ideology preached detachment from mundane worldly affairs but the exact nature and extent of this movement is not clear. It definitely involved an attempt to keep alive Persian cultural traditions in face of the assimilative policy being advocated by the rulers. The ulama pressed for their suppression and al Mahdi used this to get rid of many dissenters. Towards the end of his reign there was an Umayyad revolt in Egypt and a Shia revolt in Arabia. Both were suppressed.

The most important caliph was Hamn al Rashid (786-809). His was a period known for its splendor and grandeur. The government was largely left to the wazirs who controlled other departments (diwans) through secretaries.

It is as a patron of the arts and learning that Hamn is most remembered. Music and poetry were encouraged and artistes were liberally rewarded. Baghdad attracted philosophers, poets, scholars and artistes and became the center for the study of natural science and metaphysics. Important works of astronomy, medicine and mathematics were translated from Greek and Sanskrit. The Arabic knowing zimmis, were the ones most active in this field. The opulence of the court and lifestyle of the rich in Baghdad became the subject of many legends.

The cultural flowering was possible because of the active economy of the state. The empire encompassed all the major regional trade routes. With increasing commerce, urbanization, was rapid. Baghdad continued to flourish even when abandoned as a capital. Economic growth was accelerated by the development of an absolutist state.

Commerce flourished because of peace within the empire. The empire had extremely busy ports not only in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf but also in the Black, Red, Caspian and the Mediterranean seas. Markets grew and prospered. The increasing wealth of individuals (usually members of the Abbasid family, government officers and large land owners) generated a phenomenal trade in luxury items. One authority includes in the list of such items the following: silks and brocades; skins and furs of such animals like panther, sable, gray squirrel, ermine, minx, fox, beaver spotted hare, and goat; many varieties of spices and aromatics; drugs; musk; aloes; camphor; woods particularly teak and ebony; amber; rubies; gold; tin; wax; honey; hazel nuts; gold and silver utensils; crockery; a wide variety of slaves and even animals like tigers, panthers, elephants, peacocks, falcons, horses, sheep and cattle. Goods came from China, South-east Asia, Western Europe and from as far places as Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Russia and Spain. Trade encouraged local production. Banking and credit facilities developed. The government used bankers for the transfer of its taxes.

The governing classes invested in trade and speculated. Partnerships were common often involving Muslims and non-Muslims or with partners based in places as far as Gujarat or Spain. The government organized messenger services and it seems individuals had also organized a postal service along the main land and sea routes.

Money was invested in handicraft industries. Paper making technology was imported from China and it soon replaced papyrus leaves for writing and gave a tremendous boost to literary activities. Production of textiles flourished. State workshops employed many craftsmen but most craftsmen continued to work independently. The wealth, in turn strengthened the absolutist tendencies of the state.

Conversion, encouraged since the time of Umar II, now got a further impetus. The vast numbers migrating to the towns found it convenient to convert. A more popular version of Islam, independent of the fierce theological debates going on at that time, emerged in these cities. The new converts brought into Islam the cultural traditions of their former beliefs.

Harun decided to divide his empire among his sons to ward off any succession struggle. Al Amin was to inherit the title of the caliph as well as Fertile Crescent and western provinces. Al Mamun, his brother, was to get Khurasan and the eastern provinces, full autonomy and an army. Al Mamun would have to recognize the sovereignty of Al Amin whom he would succeed as the caliph. This personal and whimsical decision nearly wrecked the state structure built with such effort. A civil war followed Harun's death. Al Mamun laid siege to Baghdad, Al Amin was killed and Al Mamun proclaimed caliph in 818. He had to face persistent opposition from the Shias and disaffection in the distant provinces. He personally had to proceed to Egypt to quell one such disturbance.

Al Mamun's reliance on his Khurasani soldiery and his initial decision to stay away from Baghdad led the city to revolt. Al Mamun crushed the rebellion and decided to return to Baghdad. Provincial governors (for example the Aghlabids in North Africa, Tahirids in Khurasan) who had been used to suppress rebellions now started behaving as independent rulers. The governor of Khurasan succeeded as governor by his son. A vigorous ruler, Al Mamun managed to keep a major portion of the empire together.

Al Mutasmim (833-842) who succeeded his brother recognized the implications of the developments of the previous reign. In order to free himself of the dependence on the army of the governors and of the Khurasani soldiers who till now had been the main source of support for the Abbasids, he started relying on his personal guards composed largely of purchased slaves. The caliph believed that an army of Turkish slaves, with no local links would be loyal to him. To free himself further he shifted his capital to Samarra (836). The Caliph was physically safe in Samarra but clearly losing his hold over the state apparatus. The dependence of the caliphs on their slave troops increased further during the reign of the next caliph al Wasiq (842-47).

The financial crisis was heightened by the decline of the economy of the Sawad in Iraq due to geological changes. Sawad was a major source of state income. The intensive irrigation projects in the region also caused salinization of the soil due to poor drainage. The spread of factional fighting and the pampering of the slave troops accompanied decline in revenue. Decline in state income increased corruption, which weakened the caliph further.

Al Wasiq became aware at his vulnerability at the hands of his slave troops and tried to introduce other ethnic elements into this body. He introduced factions within a group whose main advantage till now had been its cohesiveness. Factions within the slave corps soon turned the caliphs into pawns in their struggle for power.

When Mutawakkil.(847-61) designated his three young sons as his successors he divided up the empire and sent them off to their particular areas. The commanders and the administrators accompanying them were allowed to deduct military expenditure before sending it to the central treasury. The commanders were also given *iqtas* (land grants) within the provinces. Till now the *iqtas* were only given to royal relatives or civil functionaries. The *iqtas* became a crucial institution in the militarized states that emerged from the wreckage of the Abbasid Empire.

The tenth century, as we have indicated earlier, saw a serious trouble brewing within the economy of the empire leading to peasant rebellions. The Caliphs, incapable of running the state surrendered their powers to the Turkish generals. By the time of the Caliph Mamum the military branch of the empire had come to dominate the civil and the money that came from the tax farms was insufficient to pay them. So the practice of giving the military the right to collect taxes was resorted to.

This new *iqta* was the outcome of two previous existing institutions -- the tax farm and the amirate or the provincial government. The latter institution till now had worked through loyal governors and a strict separation of the military and financial arms of government through the amir and the Amil. By the time Mutadid came to power in 892 the central treasury was empty and the military *iqta* was the only way of controlling the provinces. The military governors were instructed to protect trade and soon the military *iqta* included in it taxes from inter regional trade. Once a military governor was assigned the right to collect taxes from a large area, it was very easy for him to become semi independent.

Decline of the central authority was reflected in the series of disturbances, which the caliphs had great difficulty in quelling. The new movements against the caliphs tended to be concentrated in territorial blocks. The populations preferred the effective local governor to the distant and ineffective caliph. In the ninth century the Aghlabids became independent in Tunisia. In 909 the Fatimids replaced them. Who extended their control over Egypt in the second half of the tenth century. In 897 the Zaydi Shias had established their independent rule in the Yemen. In 905 the Hamdanids became independent in Mosul. The Samanids came to control northeast Iran. Finally in 945, the Buyids, who had originated in the lands south of the Caspian Sea occupied Baghdad and control the Caliph. The Caliphal state from now on ceased to exist as an independent entity and the Muslims living in independent political kingdoms. The Caliph continued to exist but his role was purely symbolic and religious.

11.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have discussed the Arab World in context with the spread of Islam in the Arabian peninsular and outside it. You must have noticed how the rise of lslam brought about a change in state and society. The predominately Bedouin tribal structures transformed into Islamic state and society. After Prophet's death the period of first four Caliphs witnessed the consolidation of polity. In the new set up the institution of Caliph got established. The Caliph assumed the position as the temporal and religious head of the state in the Islamic World. The seat of Caliphate shifted from Medina to Kufah during the period of Caliph Ali.

The rule of first four Caliphs was followed by the establishment of Umayyad dynasty (661 AD. to 750 AD). The seat of Caliphate now moved to Damascus. During the rule of Umayyads, contrary to the principles of Islam the dynastic rule got established. The Umayyad rule was followed by Abbasid rule (751 A.D. to 1258 A.D.) with seat of Caliphate shifting to Baghdad. The Abbasid power effectively declined from 10th century onwards. It was now symbolic only devoid of real authority outside the area of their control. We also discussed in brief the changes in the society, state and economy from the time of emergence of Islam, to the Abbasid dynasty.

11.8 EXERCISES

1) Give a brief account of the Arab Society before the advent of Islam.

2) Why were the powerful tribes of Mecca opposed to the message of Prophet Muhammad?

3) How Prophet Muhammad succeeded in establishing his control over Mecca?

4) How Umar consolidated the Islamic state?

5) How Umayyads succeeded in establishing centralized rule? What were the reasons for decline of Umayyad dynasty?

UNIT 12 CHINA

Structure

12.1 Introduction

12.2 The State

  - 12.2.1 The Scope of the Chinese Empire
  - 12.2.2 The Emperor
  - 12.2.3 The Bureaucracy

12.3 Chinese Society

  - 12.3.1 An Agrarian Society
  - 12.3.2 Gentry-dominated Society
  - 12.3.3 Family and Clan

12.4 The Religious Tradition

  - 12.4.1 Confucianism
  - 12.4.2 Religious Traditions Associated with Confucianism
  - 12.4.3 Taoism and Buddhism
  - 12.4.4 Some General Characteristics of Religion in China

12.5 Summary

12.6 Exercises

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

12.1 INTRODUCTION

We will not be discussing the complete history of China but would focus on some main aspects of the Chinese history before the modern period. In the present Unit, we will discuss the state, society and religion in the pre-modern China.

The social and political order of pre-modern China was one of the most stable and most highly organized in the world. It would not be wrong to say that seldom have so many people over such a wide geographical area been bound together by a single political structure and set of social and cultural norms, values and traditions, for such a length of time. The capacity of this order to withstand the shocks of civil war, natural calamities and alien invasion, and to accommodate significant social and economic development and growth of population, particularly in the last thousand years before its final collapse in the 20th century, was truly remarkable. Because of its unusual stability, continuity and sophistication, no student of world history and civilization can afford to be ignorant of the political structure and social system of traditional China, or of the ideological and spiritual outlook on which these were based. In this Unit, you will learn about the main features of the Imperial State and society of traditional China, and the main belief systems of the Chinese, and about how these interacted with and reinforced each other to create a truly unique civilization and way of life.

Pre-modern China has been characterized in many different ways. It has been called a form of *"oriental despotism"*, or a *bureaucratic society*. It has also been characterized as a *gentry society* or a *Confucian society*. What do all these terms mean? While none of these characterizations by themselves is adequate, in the course of reading this Unit, you will find that they all refer to various key features of China's traditional polity, social structure and value system that distinguish it most clearly from other pre-modern societies.

In this Unit, we will take account of the state, the scope of Chinese empire and the position of emperor. The bureaucracy in China was unique in ancient and medieval period and played a key role in the affairs of the state. In our discussion of society you will notice that it was predominantly an agrarian society which was dominated by the gentry. The family and clan were basic units of social structure. The last section of the Unit will be devoted to the study of Religion. Here we will discuss Confucianism which was not strictly a religion but influenced the religion and society for a very long period of time. Besides, Confucianism we will also discuss Taoism and Buddhism. Let us begin with the State.

12.2 THE STATE

Perhaps the most remarkable product of traditional Chinese civilization was the Imperial State. With a tradition of more than 2000 years, and lasting in basically unchanged form for nearly 1000 years, its iron frame held China together as a single political unit through most of its recorded history down to modern times. Presiding over it was the Emperor, the "Son of Heaven" whose authority and prestige was acknowledged by peoples even outside China's administrative boundaries. However its most distinctive feature was rule through a highly structured bureaucracy or elite corps of officials, the so-called mandarins, who were in the main recruited through a system of examinations based on scholarship.

This state came into being in a recognizable form in 221 B.C., when the ruler of Qin, one of the many feudal states competing for supremacy at that time, unified China and proclaimed himself the First Emperor. For the first time, the entire realm was divided into standard administrative units and ruled directly by the Emperor through his officials. Although this system underwent substantial modifications under later dynasties, and even collapsed altogether for a period of three and a half centuries after the fall of the Han dynasty (around 220 A.D.), it remained the norm and the basic pattern of governing in pre-modern China.

12.2.1 The Scope of the Chinese Empire

One of the basic tensions in the Chinese Empire was the contradiction between its universalist self-image, and the actual territorial limits of its administrative power. Being the pre-eminent power in East Asia, and separated by formidable mountains, desert wasteland and seas from any other power comparable in size and strength, it was natural that the Chinese considered their Empire to be inclusive of "all under Heaven" (Tian Xia). The Emperor of China was seen not just as the ruler of those provinces directly governed by him, but as a benevolent authority presiding over peoples far and near. This image was reinforced by the theory and practice of the so-called tribute system, in which envoys of a wide variety of non-Chinese states arrived more or less regularly at the Imperial court to pay their respects to the Emperor bearing gifts that were considered a form of tribute.

The net result was that the boundary between what constituted China and what was outside China was never as clearly demarcated as it would have been, say, in Europe, or as it is in modern times. For the most part, the pattern was as follows: the Emperor directly ruled over a core area of about 18 provinces through a bureaucracy. Regions around the periphery continued to govern themselves according to their own systems, and were by and large left to themselves as long as they did not pose a threat to or openly challenge the authority of the Chinese Emperor. In certain periods, to forestall trouble from those regions, or under a particularly ambitious Emperor, the political and military power of the Chinese Empire was extended into these regions to the west and north. At other times, it was the rulers of these regions who took advantage of conditions of crisis or decay in China proper, and who invaded the Chinese Empire either fully or in part. The most successful of these invasions, however, such as the Mongol and the Manchu conquests, resulted not in the break-up of the Chinese Empire, but only in its continuation in virtually the same form under a new "Son of Heaven".

12.2.2 The Emperor

The basic function and responsibility of the Emperor in China was to maintain order – both the political-social order and also the natural order of things. In the first sense, the Emperor was the supreme civil and military head. Unlike the Emperor of Japan, for example, he was not a figurehead but the actual head of the government. All officials were directly appointed by him and were directly accountable to him. In all periods, severe punishments could be and were often imposed on officials who fell out of favour with the Emperor. He was expected to personally go through the staggering number of documents and proposals put before him on all matters connected with government, and to take decisions on those. He was the supreme lawmaker and the final court of appeal in all cases. He also commanded the armed forces. Particularly from the 11th century onwards, the Emperors made sure that military power was highly centralized and no regional warlords were allowed to emerge. He was also, in a significant sense, the cultural head of his people, and great importance was attached to his role as the patron of learning and art.

For these reasons, the political system in China has been characterized as a despotism or autocracy. There were, however, some restraints on the arbitrariness of an Emperor. In the first place, because of the great veneration paid to ancestors, the Emperor could not be seen as acting contrary to the precedent set by the Emperors before him, particularly those of his own ruling house. Secondly, there was a tradition of high officials criticizing an Emperor who strayed from the accepted norms, and the Emperors were expected to respect their words or at least let them speak without punishment. There was even a specific group of officials known as the censors whose job was to criticize the Emperor when they thought it necessary.

The cosmological role ascribed to the Emperor also put some restraints on his freedom of action. The Emperor was considered to be the intermediary between Heaven and Earth. Not only was he held responsible for maintaining order among men, but he was also held responsible for maintaining the natural order of things. Unusual natural disturbances, such as major earthquakes, floods, the appearance of comets, and so on, were interpreted as omens that all was not well on earth and that the Emperor was failing in his duties. Very often, natural disasters went hand in hand with social and political unrest, resulting in widespread belief that the Emperor had lost the "Mandate" given to him by Heaven to rule and that his subjects were justified in rebelling against him. The Emperor may have been the "Son of Heaven"; but unlike in some other pre-modern societies, the special relationship with Heaven was not enjoyed by the individual who was the Emperor, but was the prerogative of the institution – in other words, whoever occupied the imperial throne was considered to be the Son of Heaven and to enjoy Heaven's Mandate. All Emperors and ruling houses were thus aware of the impermanence of their position, and the theory of the *Mandate of Heaven* was often skillfully manipulated by their advisors and officials to get an Emperor to adopt a particular course of action or to change his ways.

12.2.3 The Bureaucracy

Throughout its long history, China was subjected to as much warfare, internal rebellion, foreign invasions, and changes of the ruling house, as any other society. What then accounts for the unusual stability of its unified imperial state and of the institutions that were part of it? No doubt a key factor was the tradition of rule by an established, centrally-directed bureaucracy, that survived even the most violent upheavals.

Over the course of 2000 years, the bureaucracy in China acquired its own distinctive method and style of functioning, its own elaborate set of rules governing recruitment, promotion, transfer and even appearance and behaviour. Individually, a bureaucrat or official could be treated most arbitrarily by his Emperor and even be put to death. But collectively, the imperial bureaucracy survived even the most tyrannical Emperors, and no Emperor could rule without their expertise in managing the affairs of a realm as vast and complex as China.

The bureaucrats were indeed "experts", but they were experts in the management of men and human affairs in general, and by and large were not technocrats with specialized knowledge of certain subjects. They presided over the key posts in the administration, in much the same way that the members of the civil services in India today are expected to. The civil administration in China was divided into the central and the provincial administration. At the Centre, the highest officials were those who directly dealt with the Emperor – the officials of the Grand Secretariat, and later, of the Grand Council. The routine business of state was divided between the Six Boards (roughly equivalent to our Ministries), dealing with civil appointments, revenue, rites, war, punishments and public works. The provinces were headed by governors or governors-general, below whom were the officials in charge of circuits, prefectures and districts (in descending order of importance). Newly appointed officials usually began by presiding over the administration of a district, and worked their way up the provincial administration or else were appointed to work in one of the Six Boards in the capital.

By far the most distinctive feature of the Chinese bureaucracy as compared to other pre-modern bureaucracies was its method of recruitment. From the 11th century onwards, the majority of officials were recruited through a series of gruelling examinations that tested the candidates' mastery of Confucian scholarship. Examinations were open to all males, irrespective of their background, and were conducted with absolute impartiality, with the identity of the candidate unknown to the examiner. Except for years of acute political crisis, they were held with amazing regularity once every three years. Preparation for the exams often took twenty years of a man's life, but success at the examinations conferred such immense social prestige on the candidate, besides making him eligible for office (if he passed the examination at the second, provincial, level), that the entire educated class considered success at the examinations their highest aspiration. Since only exceptionally able and well-educated persons succeeded in passing the examinations, the government of imperial China has sometimes been called a meritocracy, in which only the most talented and competent persons were given the opportunity to govern. However, it must be remembered that the examinations tested only the mastery of the Confucian classics and the literary style of the candidates.

Just as the Emperor needed his officials in order to rule, the officialdom needed the Emperor to set in motion and preside over the examination system that legitimized their position. However, tension between the Emperor and his bureaucrats was a recurrent theme in China's history. Emperors constantly sought to control the bureaucrats and prevent them from becoming too powerful. Various regulations, such as that which forbade an official from serving in his own district or another which prevented him from remaining at one post for more than three years, were clearly designed to curb the powers of the bureaucrats. Apart from this, Emperors tended to resort to various means, such as the use of spies or eunuchs, to bypass regular official channels. Overall, however, the two institutions of Emperor and bureaucracy worked closely together, and it is this that accounts for the stability and longevity of the imperial Chinese state. The prestige of the bureaucracy also helped to establish the tradition of civilian rule as being preferable to military rule in China. At the same time, bureaucratic rule was inherently conservative. While officials were trained to be conscientious in discharging their duties, innovation was by and large discouraged, and most officials tended to literally "rule by the book". This worked well much of the time, but had grave implications for the bureaucracy's ability to function when faced with crisis or challenges of an unprecedented nature.

12.3 CHINESE SOCIETY

In this section, we will deal with the nature of Chinese society as

- an agrarian society
- a gentry-dominated society
- a society centred around the family and clan

12.3.1 An Agrarian Society

Chinese civilization first arose on the basis of settled agricultural communities in the North China plain. The bulk of Chinese society consisted of peasants. From early on, these tillers of the soil were not serfs, unlike their counterparts in some other pre-modern societies, but had the status of freeholders who were obliged to pay taxes directly to the state. Over time, however, the burdens of paying taxes, dealing with rapacious government agents, and eking out a living from diminishing plots of land (since China did not follow a system of primogeniture) caused increasing numbers of peasants to become rent-paying tenants on the lands of big landowners. As tenants, they continued to be intensely exploited, with rents in some areas amounting to 50% of the harvest. Furthermore, a weak government at the Centre meant even less check on the extortion of landlords and local officials. It also often meant the collapse of dykes, dams and irrigation and drainage systems so necessary to sustain agriculture in the conditions of China, resulting in floods, drought and other calamities. This would in turn result in mass desertion of lands by peasants, a rise in banditry and the proliferation of secret societies – a characteristic feature of Chinese society. Secret societies usually began as mutual self-help associations among poor or displaced villagers, which were driven underground by state persecution. However, in times of great social unrest, these secret societies had the capacity to transform themselves into nuclei of major rebel movements that sometimes even succeeded in toppling the ruling dynasty.

In the period from about the 11th to the 13th century A.D., China underwent profound economic transformation within the basic framework of the agrarian economy. Rapidly expanding internal and external trade led to the growing specialization and commercialization of agriculture, the widespread use of paper money and sophisticated instruments of credit, and the rise of big merchant families, some of them amassing fabulous wealth. Merchants, however, were never accorded a high social status, and unlike in Europe, the "commercial revolution" in China did not lead to the independent political power of the merchants as a class. Most successful merchant families tended to invest their profits in acquiring land or in striving to obtain official appointments for themselves or their sons, as a means of securing what they had. Nevertheless, the growth of commerce did lead to the proliferation of towns and cities, the spread of literacy and the development of a typically urban culture which made Chinese society of the later imperial era a far cry from that of earlier times.

12.3.2 Gentry-dominated Society

The 11th century also proved to be a watershed in terms of the composition of the ruling class in China. Before that, the ruling class was a kind of aristocracy which owed its dominant position to a combination of high birth, control over huge landed estates and possession of military power. The half century of civil war that engulfed China following the collapse of the Tang dynasty in the 10th century, effectively killed off most of the great aristocratic families and broke up the big landed estates. In the new dispensation that arose after that, the Emperors ensured that military power was firmly centralized in their own hands. Thereafter, the only avenue to enjoy political power was to enter the service of the Emperor – something that could be achieved only by spending long years acquiring an education in the classics of Confucianism that stressed the virtues of loyalty and obedience to one's superior, and then passing the imperial examinations.

The ruling elite that emerged thereafter has been called the gentry – a class distinguished by a combination of landownership, education and government service. The ownership of land was important to sustain the education of the sons of the family over a period of many years before they could begin to contribute to the family fortunes. Later on, a mixture of land and commerce increasingly became the basis of the wealth of gentry families. By virtue of the refinement acquired through education, the gentry members set themselves apart socially and culturally from the rest of the population, and were entitled to various privileges not available to others. Within the class of gentry, the elite group consisted of the very small number of individuals who actually held imperial office. Access to office, particularly high office, enabled a gentry member to protect his family members and his lands from the exactions of the state, and to acquire more wealth. In this way, gentry families tended to perpetuate themselves, although strictly speaking the status of gentry member was open to any male, even from a poor peasant family, who succeeded in passing the examinations. Social mobility, frequently held up as a distinctive feature of pre-modern Chinese society, reflected the ideal rather than the reality.

The gentry-dominated social structure reinforced the imperial political power in various important ways. In the first place, many of the functions of governing and maintaining order at the local level were performed informally by gentry members who did not actually hold office. This included things like building and maintaining dams, bridges, roads, granaries and other public works, running charitable institutions like schools, orphanages and rest houses, adjudicating disputes among the local populace, acting as intermediaries between the people and the district level administration, and even organizing militia and irregular armed forces in times of trouble. This ensured that a basic type of administration stayed in place even in times of political upheaval. Secondly, the gentry provided the local know-how that the district magistrate (who was always an outsider and who stayed in office for a short period of time) could not have. They acted as his “eyes and ears”. Thirdly, because their status depended on the regular holding of examinations, the gentry developed a vested interested in the maintenance of the imperial government. It is said that the founding Emperor of the Ming dynasty in the 14th century, when reviewing the grand parade of newly successful examination candidates at Court, remarked gleefully, “All the most talented men of the Empire are in my bag!” Thus, even when a ruling house was overthrown, as long as the new ruling house carried on with the same patterns of government as their predecessors, and held examinations on schedule, they were more or less assured of gentry support.

12.3.3 Family and Clan

The basic unit of Chinese society was the family or household rather than the individual. This was so even in government records and tax registers. The Chinese family was patriarchical, with a strict hierarchy of relationships. Filial piety, or obedience to one’s parents, was one of the cardinal social virtues. This was reinforced by the practice of venerating one’s ancestors, a very important tradition in Chinese society.

The average size of the family in China was not big, particularly among the peasantry. But the ideal of the large joint family, presided over by the family patriarch and with all the sons and their families living under one roof, was cherished and implemented where feasible particularly among the upper class. Even where all members did not live together, kinship links were zealously maintained. This accounted for the typically Chinese phenomenon of large clans, consisting of all those who could trace their kinship with each other through the male line. Clans had certain definite functions in the society. Clan members jointly observed rituals, administered common property such as burial plots and ancestral halls, looked after the welfare of members in need, sponsored the education of talented younger males, settled disputes among themselves, maintained genealogies, imparted moral-ethical training and education to younger members and enforced discipline. Clans often transcended class lines, containing both wealthier and poorer members, but the existence of clans nevertheless did not mitigate the class divisions in the society as a whole.

In theory, the State approved of large and well-knit families. Families were where people were taught the qualities of obedience, loyalty and respect for hierarchy – all qualities which the imperial government liked to see among its subjects. Families could also be expected to keep in check deviant tendencies among its members, and thus helped the State to maintain order. However, in practice, the State was also wary of clans emerging as rival centres of power, and kept a close watch on the activities and behaviour of the more powerful clans.

12.4 THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION

The prevalence of religion in pre-modern China is one of the subjects most hotly debated among historians, sociologists and anthropologists. On the one hand, by far the most influential and dominant belief system of the Chinese was Confucianism, which was totally unconcerned about questions such as the existence of God or an afterlife, and which had a pronounced this-worldly orientation. China also lacked a tradition of a strong, centrally organized religion or priesthood. On the other hand, no one can deny the Chinese fascination with the supernatural, or the proliferation of gods, goddesses and spirits who were venerated with great devotion by Chinese from all walks of life in countless temples and shrines in every corner of the land. How are these two things to be reconciled? The problem stems mainly from this: the Chinese had both a profound moral/ethical tradition, as well as a rich tradition of religious worship, but their most important moral and ethical beliefs did not derive from an organized religion.

In this Unit, we will not deal with the question of whether Confucianism can be considered a religion. What is important is that no discussion of Chinese philosophy and values or of the socio-political order carries any meaning without understanding Confucianism. Therefore, we will discuss the role of Confucianism in pre-modern Chinese society first, and then take a look at other religious traditions in China.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

12.4.1 Confucianism

The term Confucianism refers to the teachings of the philosopher Confucius who lived in the 6th century BC. Living in an age of great turbulence and the breakdown of social and political institutions, Confucius' primary concern was to find a way out of the chaos and to restore order and moral values. The centre-piece of his philosophy was the notion that this could be achieved if truly moral men (or "gentlemen") were to emerge. Such men were not born with the right moral qualities, however, but actively cultivated these through education and the observance of rites, propriety and proper relationships. The cardinal relationships in society were considered to be those between parents and child, sovereign and subject, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother – all relationships between superiors and inferiors – and between friends. Confucius stressed the supreme importance of certain qualities, such as benevolence, filial piety, loyalty, sincerity, and so on. If the right men were in charge of all affairs, Confucius believed, then peace and harmony and virtue would be restored in the society.

Even during his lifetime, Confucius gathered around him a number of devoted disciples. But it is with the adoption of the teachings of Confucius and his school as the official orthodoxy several centuries later, from the time of the Han dynasty (203 B.C. to 220 A.D.), that Confucianism became an all-pervasive influence. It moulded the behaviour and thinking of Chinese and reinforced their key institutions in various significant ways.

- In the first place, it lent a positive, or pro-active, element to the Chinese outlook. The solution to man's problems lay not in escape from earthly life or the denial of desires, but in actively cultivating the right qualities and rectifying things on this earth.
- It placed great emphasis on education and on public service. The upright scholar-official was the model of the Confucian gentleman.
- It stressed the need for order and performance of one's social and public duties. This made it a most suitable philosophy to reinforce the imperial State.
- It accepted hierarchy in the social order and preached the need for obedience and submission to authority, equating the relationship of a sovereign to his subject with that of parent to child.
- By stressing the notion of rule based on "virtue" or moral authority rather than military power or rules and regulations, it worked to temper or soften the harsher aspects of imperial power, and reinforced the tradition of civilian rule.

12.4.2 Religious Traditions Associated with Confucianism

Confucius himself was hardly concerned with notions of God or an afterlife. Nevertheless, Confucianism as it grew developed a cosmology and metaphysics, some elements of which were derived from ancient pre-Confucian religious traditions, and some of which developed later, partly as a response to the challenge posed by Buddhism and Taoism.

A prominent tradition which came to be accepted as part of the Confucian tradition was the practice of ancestor worship, observed by Chinese from all walks of life. The memory of ancestors was kept alive in numerous tangible ways, through various forms of veneration. Apart from this was the notion of Heaven and of Fate. It was believed that Heaven determined destiny on all matters ranging from affairs of State to the most personal aspects of an individual's life. However, because Heaven, Earth and Man were considered to part of a single trilogy, the actions of men were considered capable of influencing the course imposed on them by Heaven. Trying to predict or understand what Heaven had in store for men, or the practice of divination, was another feature of the Chinese religious tradition. The concept of Yin and Yang, or the unity of negative and positive elements, and of the Five Elements, were also part of the Confucian belief system. In later centuries, the rise of neo-Confucianism, or the revived version of Confucianism after its temporary eclipse by Buddhism, led to the incorporation of certain other concepts of a metaphysical nature into the doctrine. This included the notion that all things derived from a single source known as the Supreme Ultimate, and consisted of both li and qi, loosely defined as 'principle' and 'matter'.

12.4.3 Taoism and Buddhism

Undoubtedly, however, the great variety of gods and goddesses and spirits in the Chinese pantheon and the rich tradition of religious worship, owed its origins not to Confucianism but to the influence of Taoism and of Buddhism of the Mahayana variety. Taoism began roughly in the same period that Confucius lived, as a simple mystical philosophy put forward by its founder, Lao Zi. In contrast with Confucianism, Taoism was not concerned with the affairs of society or the State or moral values, but with the exact opposite – with Nature, with spontaneity and a whimsical attitude towards life. However, as it evolved, Taoism took on a variety of elements, including a pantheon of gods and a group of priests which helped it to spread among the masses of people, though it never became an organized religion on the lines of Buddhism. It exerted a profound influence on Chinese poetry and painting, with their lyrical quality and recurrent theme of man-in-Nature. Among the scholar- official class, it offered a kind of philosophical retreat from the rigidity as well as the unending cares and responsibilities of social and public life. It was often said that a scholar-official was a Confucian when in office, and a Taoist when out of office.

Buddhism was absorbed gradually into China after its first introduction from India around the 1st century A.D. Its influence peaked in the 5th to 8th centuries A.D., when it enjoyed the patronage of Chinese rulers, and the Buddhist sangha became very powerful. Both Buddhism and Taoism gained ground precisely in those periods when the imperial system was in severe crisis and when Confucianism, as the ideology of the imperial system, suffered from a loss of credibility. In particular, Mahayana Buddhism, with its profound philosophy about the nature of suffering in this world, and its uplifting concept of compassion and salvation for mankind through sacrifice, filled a philosophical and spiritual need among Chinese in this period in a way that Confucianism could not. In the centuries of political chaos and mass dislocation that followed the break up of the Han dynasty, the Buddhist sangha that extended beyond the confines of the family and the State provided a vital form of social integration. Although Buddhism's influence waned with the revival of the imperial system and Confucianism especially after the 10th century, it never faded out altogether as it did in India. Instead, it continued to exert the most lively influence on popular religious life. Along with popular Taoism, it also fulfilled another significant role in Chinese society, as the ideology of many important rebel movements.

12.4.4 Some General Characteristics of Religion in China

In conclusion, some important features of religion in China were as follows:

- It was very eclectic. In other words, as it was practiced by the people, the different religious traditions were not considered mutually exclusive. An individual could follow Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism without feeling the need to identify himself with one only. This permitted different traditions to remain in the background, but not disappear completely, when another tradition was on the rise. Full-fledged religious wars among groups of people were almost non-existent.
- The State in general tolerated different religious faiths, and persecuted them only when it was feared that they were becoming rival centres of power or were undermining established social norms. Rarely were

persecutions unleashed on the grounds of doctrinal heresy alone. Thus, the 3 or 4 major instances of persecution of Buddhism usually resulted in the disbanding of the monasteries and their lands, and the return of monks and nuns to lay life, rather than in wholesale extermination or reconversion.

- The moral dimension of Chinese deities was not strong. Rather, gods and goddesses were worshipped because of their believed power to help or harm an individual or group.

12.5 SUMMARY

China was a vast country of great diversity, and it is not easy to make generalizations about its traditions and institutions. These were by no means stagnant, and evolved considerably over the course of her long history. Nevertheless, one cannot help being struck by the remarkable continuity and coherence of its traditions and institutions, and the way in which they interacted with and reinforced each other. An agrarian society composed of closely knit families and lineages formed the basis of one of the most sophisticated and powerful empires of the pre-modern world. The social structure and political power were closely intertwined. The Confucian ethical system pervaded both the family and the imperial system, while other great religious traditions lent richness and diversity to the cultural and spiritual life. This entire complex civilization lasted right through to the early 20th century when it was finally brought down by a combination of internal decay and external pressures.

12.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the role of the emperor and the bureaucracy in the Chinese State?
2) Analyze in brief the nature of Chinese society.
3) Can Confucianism be treated as a religion? How did Buddhism spread in China?

.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 13 DEBATES ON FEUDALISM

Structure

13.1 Introduction

13.2 The Early Formulations

13.3 The Pirenne Thesis

13.4 Feudalism as Ties of Dependence

13.5 The Feudal Revolution Thesis

13.6 The Plough and the Stirrup Thesis

13.7 Feudalism as Mode of Production

13.8 The Recent State of Debate

13.9 Summary

13.10 Exercises

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The debates on feudalism cover a wide spectrum of themes ranging from the precise meaning of the term to the origins, nature and consequences of the system under survey. Although one may find the Latin word *feodalis*, from which the word 'feudal' has been derived, in medieval Europe, the term was employed in a strictly legal sense. It was used to connote the fief (one particular form of real property right), and not to denote a complex type of social organization. The word 'feudalism' was popularized through the works of the eighteenth-century French philosophers, notably by Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu, who used it to indicate the parcelling out of sovereignty among a host of pretty princes and lords during the Middle Ages. However, with the progress of the French Revolution, the term practically came to be used as a general description covering the many abuses of the *Ancien Régime*. Since then, different meanings have been attached to the word 'feudalism' and the historians have applied the term with varying emphases and connotations, with the broad agreement that feudalism, either as a political structure or as a social formation, was the dominant system in western and central Europe at least between the tenth and the twelfth centuries.

In this Unit, we will study the views of various scholars on feudalism in Europe. Beginning with the early formulations about the origin of the feudal system we will review the recent debate on it. Main views discussed in this Unit will include Henri Pirenne thesis, The Feudal Revolution thesis, the Plough and Stirrup thesis and the recent debates on it. We will also study the views which represent feudalism as ties of dependence or as mode of production.

13.2 THE EARLY FORMULATIONS

The early historians of feudalism often emphasised the purely legalistic aspects of this system, namely fiefs, vassalage, knightly or military service and justice by the lords. The pioneering work of F. W. Maitland, a British historian of

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

law in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was carried out within this understanding of feudalism. According to this tradition of scholarship, the basic characteristics of feudalism in medieval Europe were fragmentation of political authority, public power in private hands, and a military system in which an essential part of the armed forces was secured through private contracts. In other words, feudalism was conceptualized as a method of government, and a way of securing the forces necessary to preserve that method of government. Drawing upon this legal and rather technical use of the term, many present-day historians think it necessary to restrict the use of 'feudalism' only to the specifically voluntary and personal bonds of mutual protection, loyalty and support among the members of the administrative, military or ecclesiastical elite in medieval Europe, to the exclusion of the involuntary obligations attached to the unfree tenures. The bonds which the term 'feudalism' excludes, according to this formulation, may be treated under a separate category of Manorialism.

However, almost all these characteristics of the medieval European political organization appeared to have formed a sharp break from the traditions of Antiquity. As a form of the disintegration of the political authority, the origin of feudalism was therefore located in the customs and practices of the 'barbarian' Germanic tribes who engineered the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. In the early legalistic and dynastic histories the term usually carried a sense of political decline and economic retrogression. Conditions of a 'natural economy', as Max Weber argued, or those of a 'closed house-economy', as Karl Bucher put it, were said to have enveloped the feudal Europe. However, by the end of the nineteenth century most of the professional historians came to abandon such catastrophic views of the 'barbarian invasions' and began to appreciate the complexities of the transition from the ancient world to medieval civilization. Fustel de Coulanges developed a theory of Roman origins of feudalism, which stressed the Roman precedence of the mansi and the villa, and had a significant influence on historical interpretations in his day. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many historians tended to emphasize the elements of continuity between the Germanic kingdoms and the Roman Empire, among whom the French historian Henri See, Belgian historian Otto Seeck and the Austrian historian Alfons Dopsch were particularly important.

Tracing the roots of the various forms of landholding, social classes and political structure to the organization of the later Roman Empire, Dopsch argued that in medieval Europe, save for the temporary disturbances caused by the invasions, trades still circulated along the Roman roads, carrying not only the luxuries but also the necessities of life. For Dopsch, the towns continued to exist and innumerable local markets gave a lie to the theory of regression to natural economy. He also could not see any cultural break between the late antiquity and the middle ages: "The Germans were not enemies to destroy or wipe out Roman culture, on the contrary they preserved and developed it". Even the French historian Ferdinand Lot, who believed that the end of Antiquity had a disastrous consequence for the European civilization, held the pace of transition to have been quite slow and observed that the continued contact and gradual fusion of the Roman and Germanic worlds enabled many Roman institutions to pass into the structure of the barbarian kingdoms.

13.3 THE PIRENNE THESIS

The question of continuity with the classical world took a radically new turn between the years 1922 and 1935 when the distinguished Belgian historian Henri Pirenne began to put forward his famous thesis regarding the impact of the Islamic expansion on the development of feudalism in Europe. The thesis was divided in two distinct parts, one showing the continuation of the classical tradition in the Merovingian period, the other demonstrating the fundamental change of society in the Carolingian age. According to Pirenne, the Germanic invasions destroyed neither the Mediterranean unity of the ancient world, nor the cultural unity of the 'Romania' as it still existed in the fifth century. From the fifth to the eighth century the Syrian merchants continued to bring the spices and luxury clothes of the Orient, the wines of Ghaza, the oil of North Africa and the papyrus of Egypt to the ports of the West from those of Egypt and Asia Minor. The royal revenue was derived in the largest measure from the indirect taxes (tonlieu) on this commerce and the use of the Roman gold solidus, at once the instrument and symbol of the economic unity of the Mediterranean basin, was preserved. As the land-locked sea remained the highway of communication with the Byzantine Empire for the barbarians established in Italy, Africa, Spain and Gaul, the Mediterranean character of the ancient civilization was not actually ruptured in the Merovingian period.

The cause of the break with the tradition of antiquity, Pirenne argued, was the rapid and unexpected advance of the Arab Muslims under the Umayyad caliphate which closed up the Mediterranean along the coast of Gaul [modern day France] about the year 650, and severed Gallic relations with Syria and Egypt, drying up the stream of commerce from Marseilles. Although the Byzantine imperial navy succeeded in repulsing the Arab offensive from the Aegean Sea, the Adriatic and the southern shores of Italy, the Tyrrhenian Sea fell completely under the domination of the Saracens. They encircled it to the south and the west through Africa and Spain, with the strategically located naval bases at the Balearic Isles, Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily. The upshot of this advance was the final separation of the East from the West, and the end of the Mediterranean unity. From the beginning of the eighth century the whole economic movement in the region was directed towards Baghdad, and countries like Africa and Spain, previously important members of the Mediterranean community, were drawn into this new orbit. In Pirenne's formulation, the Mediterranean functioned no longer as a channel of commercial and intellectual communication between the east and the west, but rather as a barrier between two strikingly distinct, if not hostile, civilizations.

This was, according to Pirenne, the founding moment of feudalism in Europe. Having been thus 'bottled up', the West was forced to live upon its own resources. In the course of the eighth century, the urban life and the professional merchants disappeared, credit and contracts were no longer in use, the importance of writing decreased, gold coinage yielded to silver monometallism, and the former 'exchange economy' was substituted by an economy without markets. This was in fact an economy of regression, occupied solely with the cultivation of the soil and the consumption of its products by the owners, where payments were largely rendered in kind and each estate aimed at supplying all its own needs. The utility of the innumerable small weekly local markets was limited to satisfying the household needs of the surrounding population. While a number of Jew traders were certainly engaged in long-distance trade, this was principally a spasmodic and occasional commerce in expensive commodities which only a very limited clientele could afford and consequently its effect on the entire economy was minimal. As a result of such 'commercial paralysis', the empire of Charlemagne, in striking contrast to Roman and Merovingian Gaul, was essentially a land empire. Movable wealth no longer played any significant part in economic life. The possession of land began to determine the nature and modes of social existence. The return of society to a purely agricultural civilization was expressed in the political sphere through the disintegration of public authority in the hands of its agents, who, thanks to their territorial possessions, had become independent and considered the authority with which they were invested as a part of their patrimony. On a larger scale, again, the shattering of the Mediterranean unity restricted the papal authority to western Europe, and the conquest of Spain and Africa left the king of the Franks the master of the Christian Occident, the only temporal authority to whom the Pontiff could turn. In this sense, Pirenne wrote in a famous sentence, "Without Islam the Frankish empire would probably never have existed and Charlemagne, without Mohammet, would be inconceivable."

Pirenne's thesis drew both applause and criticism. Many historians refused to admit that the growth of Islam had been so decisive a factor in the development of feudalism in Europe, particularly since there was no satisfactory evidence indicating an active Arab policy of prohibiting commerce in the Mediterranean. Pirenne was also criticized of overstating both the cultural unity of the Roman world and the role of Oriental commerce in the economic life of Merovingian Gaul. Later research emphasized the extent of trade and commerce in the Carolingian age. The studies of M. Sabbe on the commerce in precious commodities attempted to show that the Mediterranean trade was interrupted less completely than Pirenne had thought. R. S. Lopez (*Birth of Europe*) and F. L. Ganshof (*The Carolingians and the Frankish and Feudalism*) demonstrated that there was still a considerable degree of commerce in the Mediterranean ports between the eighth and the tenth centuries. However, Pirenne's work certainly inaugurated a closer scrutiny of the economic evidence, widened the field of historical inquiries and stimulated research in several new directions.

13.4 FEUDALISM AS TIES OF DEPENDENCE

While the Pirenne thesis undeniably offered a powerful and provocative explanation of the origin of feudalism in medieval Europe, it did not concern itself very much with the definition of feudalism. By the early half of the twentieth century at least two opposing, though related, conceptualizations of feudalism were in circulation. The mainstream liberal view, springing from the legalistic school of history, tended to regard it as a body of institutions that created and regulated the exchange of obligations of obedience and service on the one hand and those of protection and maintenance on the other when one free man (known as the vassal) used to surrender himself to another free but more powerful man (known as the lord). Since the lord, in order to fulfil his obligation of maintenance, usually granted to his vassal a unit of real property known as a fief or feodalis, historians such as F. L. Ganshof and F. M. Stenton argued, the term feudalism covered no more than the institutions which involved these practices. It was precisely in this technical sense, they maintained, that the term could be properly applied to describe the states born of the break-up of the Carolingian empire and the countries influenced by them.

On the other hand, the Marxist and especially the Soviet historians expanded the use of the term to address a more general examination of the economic structure of the concerned society. In the nineteenth century Karl Marx had already proposed an understanding of human history based on the gradual rise and fall of different modes of production which were said to have determined the general character of the social, political and ideological processes. In keeping with this formulation, they tended to characterize the system of reciprocal but unequal personal relations among members of the military elite as a mere derivative of the larger social relations of production which had to work within a mode of production marked by the absence of commodity exchange.

Largely moving away from both the restrictive legalistic view and the economic deterministic conceptualization of 'feudalism', the French historian Marc Bloch chose to explain the phenomenon by exploring the various forms of, what he called, 'the ties between man and man'. Bloch viewed feudalism as a set of social conditions where the relations of personal protection and subordination immensely expanded as the dispersal of political authority operated through an extreme subdivision of the rights of real property. Examining the overlapping careers of family solidarity and feudalism, Bloch argued that the bond of kinship progressively tightened with the development of feudalism. The group founded on blood relationship functioned both as a springboard of help and protection for the individual (which could be most effectively mobilized in the cases of blood-feuds), as the power of the state to provide such protection declined, and as an impediment for his possession rights. There was an important aspect of economic solidarity too, since several related households frequently formed 'brotherhoods' which not only shared the same room and board and cultivated the same common fields, but were also held collectively responsible for the payment of dues and commutation of services to the seigniorial lord.

In spite of several social and regional variations, Bloch argued, the principle of a 'human nexus' where one individual rendered himself as a subordinate to another permeated the whole life of feudal society. At one level, vassalage was the form of such dependence peculiar to the members of the militarized upper classes. Both the political necessities and the 'mental climate' of the age attached great value to the exchange of protection and obedience. Since the question of salary was precluded in the overwhelmingly agrarian economy with limited money exchange, fiefs or stipendiary tenements for the vassals were in widespread use. At another, the lower orders of the society were bound by a whole group of relationships of personal dependence – servitude – which had as their common characteristics a rigorous subjection on the subordinate's part, and on that of the protector a virtually uninhibited authority, productive of lucrative revenues. Bloch did not consider the manor to have been a feudal organisation in itself, though he agreed that it had positively assisted in extending the grip of feudalism over a much larger population. Within this broad framework of the pervasive ties of dependence, Bloch located the divergences both within and between feudal societies, most notably in the forms or complexity of noble association, the extent of peasant dependency and the importance of money payments. In this sense, for Bloch the term 'feudalism' was a heuristic device for comparative studies of local phenomena, rather than as a blanket definition of the medieval social order.

Bloch also underscored the transformations that occurred over time within this overall structure. Arguing that the European society underwent a series of profound and widespread changes during the middle of the eleventh century, he proposed a theory of two feudal ages. While the second feudal age did not make a complete break with the first, in almost all spheres of life some qualitatively different advances were made. The evolution of the economy in this age – primarily involving demographic growth, consolidation of human settlements, development of intercommunication, increase in trade, urban growth, and amelioration of the currency situation – entailed a genuine revision of social values. Paralleling the decay or transformation of the 'classical feudalism', as it were, a sort of contraction in the size of the kindred groups as well as a loosening of the kinship bonds were in process. In the new sectors of growth and development the emergence of the individual was already being signalled. The formation of Latin Christianity, the process of linguistic assimilation, the revival of interest in Roman law and eventually the repeated enfranchisements contributed in varying proportions to this process.

While Marc Bloch's study constituted a definite breakthrough in the analysis of the medieval societies and continues to be a classic in the field, the researches it stimulated have proposed major modifications of his thesis. Historians have pointed out that while Bloch's rich description is extremely well aware of the constant though slow changes in the feudal society, there is no identification of a driving force of change or its decline. Bloch describes, but often does not account for, the inner dynamism of the social process. Bloch has also been criticized on the grounds of a loose chronology, an inflexible conception of state and a dated conception of lineage.

13.5 THE FEUDAL REVOLUTION THESIS

Taking the cue from Bloch, Georges Duby, one of the most original and influential post-war historians of medieval society, attempted to look beyond the economic to the ideological dimensions of feudal institutions. His detailed study of the political, economic, and social life in the Maconnais settlement in France from the tenth through the twelfth centuries was published in 1953 and focused a generation of historical research on what he called the "feudal revolution" of the early eleventh century. Arguing that fief never played "more than a peripheral part in what is generally known as feudalism", Duby documented how with the collapse of royal authority in the late tenth and early eleventh century, the castellans forced the lesser landlords into vassalage and imposed on all peasants a new kind of lordship – seigneurie banale – based on taxation rather than tenure. Previously, Duby argued, the obligation to work in order to feed a master fell upon slaves, but since this period, with the increased weight of the seigniorial power, this burden came to be borne by all villagers. This involved a realignment of the social functions. On the one hand, the difference between the freemen and the serfs came to be blurred as all the villagers were subjected to identical and heavier levies. On the other hand, the differences between the laymen and the clergy came to be more sharply pronounced, with the clergy strongly defending their exemption from seigniorial exactions. The bearing of arms also became a crucial marker of social distinction in this period, with the horsemen or the knights forming a lower stratum of the aristocracy. The term 'feudal revolution' signifies this entire social process, slow but unmistakable, which not only transformed the previous economy of war and plunder, but also restructured the aristocratic family into the patrilineage and effected related changes in the domains of mental attitudes. Duby developed a fresh perspective on the question of the decline of feudalism. Unlike the Pirennean and the dominant Marxist models, which visualized the collapse of feudalism resulting from a blow from outside – either in terms of the Crusades or in relation to the increased peasant flight into the cities – Duby chose to see the decline as a slow and dynamic process which reflected the internal developments within the rural economy and society.

In his subsequent works, Duby turned to explore the ways in which the substantial growth of the rural economy after the feudal revolution accentuated the contrast between leisure and labour. His researches on the practices of family, the marriage customs, the chivalric code and the governing medieval imagination of ideal society as a sum of three distinct unequal orders (those who pray, those who fight and those who toil) attempted to elucidate the perceptions, concepts, and attitudes behind medieval institutions and practices. He called this the "imaginary" or the "mental attitudes" of the period. Focusing on the construction and function of as well as the changes in the reigning ideological models of the feudal society, Duby simultaneously mapped the social changes they were reproducing.

While much of the historiography of feudalism has now moved into Duby's perspective's shadows, his work has also generated an intense and vigorous debate among the historians. Dominique Barthelemy, in his detailed study of the feudal Vendomois society, has questioned Duby's vital methodological assumptions and argued that Duby has mistaken the change in style of documentation as the change in society itself. Theodore Evergates has pointed out that Duby's insistence on the absolute dichotomy between independent castellanies and the monarchical state has retained an old Blochian model that does not take the diverse forms of local power configurations into account. Constance Bouchard and other feminist historians have criticized Duby for underplaying the diverse ways in which the women related to the feudal revolution. His refusal to engage the secular documents, especially the royal and princely administrative registers, has also invited disapproval from many historians.

13.6 THE PLOUGH AND THE STIRRUP THESIS

Lynn White Jr. made an important intervention in the growing debate in 1962 by strongly emphasizing the role of technology in shaping the feudal societies. He argued that remarkable technological improvements in the fields of agriculture sustained and even improved the conditions of the peasantry and the artisanate even while government fell into anarchy, trade was greatly reduced, and the so-called higher realms of culture decayed. According to White, the larger medieval culture of technology was rooted in the Christian theological traditions, which greatly honoured the dignity and spiritual value of labour and encouraged the production of labour-saving machines.

At one level, White's analysis focused on the immense significance of certain technological inventions for medieval agriculture which include the use of the iron plough for tilling, the stiff-harness for equine traction, the crank in hand- querns and on rotary grindstones, the water-mill for mechanical power, marling for soil improvement and the three-field system for crop rotation.

These constituted, in White's words, no less than an agricultural revolution in the Middle Ages. The development and diffusion of the northern wheeled plough — equipped with coulter, horizontal share and mouldboard — not only greatly increased production by making the tillage of rich, heavy, badly-drained river- bottom soils possible, it also saved labour by making cross-ploughing superfluous, and thus produced the typical northern strip-systems of land division, as distinct from the older block-system dictated by the cross-ploughing necessary with the lighter Mediterranean plough. Moreover, this heavy plough needed such power that peasants pooled their oxen and ploughed together, thus laying the basis for the manor which was the medieval co-operative agricultural community. The effects of the heavy plough were supplemented and greatly enhanced in the later eighth century by the invention of the three- field system in the late eighth century. Under the two-field system the peasants' margin of production was insufficient to support a work-horse; under the three- field system the horse displaced the ox as the normal plough and draft animal of the northern plains. The traditional yoke-system of harness which neither allowed the horse to exert its full force in pulling the plough nor enabled the ancients to tie up one animal in front of another was immensely improved by the sudden and almost simultaneous appearance of the horseshoe, the tandem harness and the new horse-collar in the late ninth or early tenth century. We shall take up these issues in greater details in Unit 23. Here we pause to observe that according to White, through the shift from the ox and the two-field system to the horse and the three-field system, the northern peasantry was able to increase labour productivity by the later Middle Ages.

At another level, White claimed that the invention of the stirrup and the horseshoe played a significant role in shaping the military organization of feudal society. The stirrup not only saved the horsemen from fatigue, it also increased the effectiveness of his charge by giving him a better seat and allowing him a vastly improved footing from which to hurl his lance or swing his sword, mace, or battle-axe. White went into great detail to show that the stirrup had not been in general use in western Europe until the Carolingian Franks adopted it for their heavy shock combat cavalry in the eighth century. This cavalry was effective and expensive in equal proportions and hence, he argued, it led the early Carolingians to reorganize their realm along feudal lines so as to support mounted fighters in much greater numbers than even before. "The requirements of the new mode of warfare which the stirrup made possible found expression in a new form of western European society dominated by an aristocracy of warriors endowed with land so that they might fight in a new and highly specialized way."

White has been criticized by later historians for isolating the technical improvements from the larger social and economic processes that marked the period. In this sense, Hilton and Sawyer argued, White's thesis retained a strong content of technical determinism. In a similar vein, Perry Anderson argued that the simple existence of technological innovations was no guarantee of their widespread utilisation. Pointing out that a gap of some two or three centuries separates their initial sporadic appearance and their constitution into a distinct and prevalent system, he criticized White for overlooking the internal dynamic of the mode of production itself. The stirrup thesis was also challenged by several military historians who pointed out that it did not explain the effective use of heavily armoured cavalry without using stirrups outside France long before 700 AD or the continued use of armoured cavalry with stirrups outside France after 700 AD but without "feudalism". Most importantly, many historians have questioned White's fundamental assumption that the Franks were the first to exploit the stirrup. The individual works of Ian Heath, Philip Barker and David Nicolle have credited the Byzantine Empire and the Arab caliphate with its devising, and the Avars and the Lombards with its introduction to Europe, thereby disputing the proposed correspondence between the stirrup and feudalism.

13.7 FEUDALISM AS MODE OF PRODUCTION

It has already been mentioned that within the Marxist tradition the importance of the forces and relations of economic production were consistently emphasized since the other aspects of the feudal society were considered as reflections and expressions of this complex. Although feudalism had continued to be analyzed as a mode of production dominated by land and a natural economy within this tradition for long, the theory was fully developed and worked out in the work of the British historian Perry Anderson in 1978. It is important to mention that the different use of Marxian perspective has produced a variety of historical perspectives. While in France Guy Bois's intensive study of the village of Lournand not only confirmed Duby's findings on the small scale but also extended Duby's thesis into an intriguing argument concerning the dialectical role of economy and productive relations during the period between the Germanic invasions and the first millennium, in the context of late feudal England the Marxist historians like Dobb, Brenner and Hilton have argued in differing ways.

Anderson's analysis contradicted the conventional characterization of feudalism as an economy of regression or an era of decline and disintegration. Maintaining that feudalism was a more advanced system of enhancing agricultural productivity and the agrarian surplus than the classical slave mode of production, he argued that there were several structural contradictions within feudalism whose overall consequences were to drive the whole agrarian economy forward. The class of feudal lords extracted the surplus from the peasants or the primary producers in various forms of labour services, rents in kind or customary dues. This form was expressed through the politico-legal relations of compulsion of which serfdom was the most general form. Its necessary result was a juridical amalgamation of economic exploitation with political authority; in Marxist terminology it is known as extra-economic coercion. The peasant was subjected to the jurisdiction of his lord. At the same time, the property rights of the lord over his land were not absolute. His right in land was mediated at both ends through a lord who was his superior to whom he owed military (among other) obligations, and a vassal who was subordinate to him, who in turn owed him services and dues of various kinds. The chain of such dependent tenures linked to military service extended upwards to the summit of the system – in most cases, a monarch – who at least in principle held all lands as his domain. The consequence of such a system was that political sovereignty was never focused on a single centre. Anderson contended that while the functions of the State were thus disintegrated in a vertical allocation downwards, at each level the political and the economic relations were integrated. In this way, according to him, the parcellisation of sovereignty was constitutive of the whole feudal mode of production.

Returning to the early debates about the genesis of feudalism, Anderson chose to see the phenomenon as a 'synthesis' of elements released by the concurrent dissolution of primitive-communal and slave modes of production. In the real historical scene, he insisted, the mode of production never existed in a pure state anywhere in Europe. The concrete social formations of medieval Europe were always composite systems, in which other modes of production survived and intertwined with feudalism proper. Following the Soviet historians Liublinskaya, Gutnove and Udaltsova, Anderson advanced a three-fold zone-wise typology of feudalism. i) The first zone comprised of northern France and its neighbouring regions. In this 'core region of European feudalism', which roughly corresponded to the homeland of the Carolingian Empire, Anderson saw a 'balanced synthesis' of the Roman and the Germanic elements. ii) The second zone that lay to the south of the core region included Provence, Italy and Spain. Here, especially in Italy, the Roman legacy was much more dominant in the recombination of barbarian and ancient modes of production. Hence, the Roman legal conceptions of property as free, heritable and alienable, qualified feudal landed norms from the very beginning. The rural society was considerably heterogeneous, combining manors (mostly in Lombardy and north Italy), free-hold peasants (principally in central Italy), latifundia (particularly in south Italy) and urban landowners in different regions. Precisely for the survival of the classical traditions, the municipal political organization could also flourish in the area from the tenth century onwards. iii) In the third zone, lying to the north and east of the core region and consisting of Germany, Scandinavia and England, the influence of the Roman rule was either superficial or non-existent. Consequently, in these places an allodial peasantry strongly held on to its communal institutions which remarkably slowed down the pace of the transition towards feudalism. As a result, serfdom was not introduced into Saxony until the late twelfth century, and in fact, it was never properly established in Sweden at all. It was only due to the persistence of these older local traditions, Anderson argued, that a full-blooded feudalism arrived in Germany as late as the 12th century, while the Norman conquerors had to systematically implant from above an imported model of centralized feudalism in England.

Emphasizing the dynamic character of the feudal economy, Anderson argued that the lords and the peasants were objectively engaged in a conflictual process which in the ultimate instance tended to stimulate productivity at both ends. On the one hand, the lord sought to maximize labour services on his manor as well as dues in kind from the peasant strips, and net productivity on the noble demesnes remained substantially higher than on the peasant plots. On the other hand, the direct role of the lord in managing and supervising the process of production declined as the surplus itself grew. As a combined effect of peasant resistance, improvements in technical equipment and the customary nature of the feudal dues, a margin was created in the course of time for the results of improved productivity to accrue to the direct producer. Similarly, in characteristic opposition to the argument of urban decline in medieval Europe, Anderson claimed that although the largest medieval towns never rivalled in scale those of the ancient world, their function within the social formation was an advanced one. Because of this qualitative leap, a dynamic opposition between an urban economy of increasing commodity exchange and a rural economy of natural exchange was possible only in the feudal mode of production. The contradiction between feudalism's own rigorous tendency to a decomposition of sovereignty and the class unity of the nobility also proved to be fruitful to the extent it provided, Anderson argued, the objective condition for the political autonomy of the towns in the later middle ages.

However, the very progress of medieval agriculture, according to Anderson, began to incur its own penalties from the middle of the thirteenth century when the forces of production tended to stall and recede within the existent relations of production. Here he substantially modified the older Marxian thesis which attempted to explain the demise of the feudal system in terms of developments extraneous to the medieval dynamic. Anderson argues, both in agriculture and mining a technical barrier was reached at which exploitation became unviable or even detrimental. The 'basic motor of rural reclamation', which had driven the whole feudal economy forward for three centuries, eventually overreached this objective limit of the forces of production. As the population grew while yields fell, the seigneurial income progressively decreased. In order to compensate the decline in the revenue, the lords increasingly engaged themselves in warfare and plunder which in turn, aided by the waves of pestilence, resulted in a devastating scarcity of labour. The lords responded to the crisis by trying to reinforce harsher servile conditions that unleashed a desperate class struggle on the land. One of the fundamental contradictions of the regime – the dual articulation of the feudal mode of production in the urban and the rural sectors — now developed to a point where the former, structurally sheltered by the parcellisation of sovereignty in the medieval polity, could decisively influence the outcome of the class struggle in the latter. The towns, which increasingly came to perceive the runaway serfs as a positive labour input for urban manufacture, had already contributed to the slow but steady process of commutation of dues into money rents. Now they actively assisted the process of the dissolution of serfdom. Thus the particular mode of production crumbled because it had begun to impede the expansion of society's productive capacity. Far from the general crisis in the feudal mode of production worsening the conditions of the direct producers in the countryside, it ended by ameliorating and emancipating it.

Anderson's discussion has been criticized for being too schematic. While he insists on the 'catastrophic collision' or class struggle as the driving force which brings about both feudal society and its demise, his concentration on this single aspect leaves out the larger and more diverse picture of the feudal societies.

13.8 THE RECENT STATE OF DEBATE

The debate on feudalism is far from being closed. In fact, in the recent years the debate on feudalism has taken another interesting turn. In a 1974 essay Elizabeth Brown has severely criticized the unthinking use of the term 'feudalism' to describe heterogeneous phenomena in medieval Europe and argued that attention must be paid to the shifting meanings of the key jargons (like fief and vassal) as well as to the diverse social realities they represented. Building on the work of Brown, the historian Susan Reynolds has questioned the validity of not only the term 'feudalism', but also the system it claims to represent. Reynolds argued that the previous historians had been too ready to read back the eleventh and the twelfth century legal terminology onto the much more variegated ninth and tenth century societies. This had ended up creating a 'feudal world' which simply did not exist, or which, at most, described only small parts of France for short periods. The enormity of the claim has predictably led to a re-evaluation of the existent historical literature on feudalism.

13.9 SUMMARY

We hope this Unit has familiarized you with the views of various scholars and with the debates on feudalism. You must have noticed how scholars have tried to define feudalism, trace its origins and analyze it as a political structure and social formation. In early formulation feudalism was conceptualized as a method of government and a way of securing the forces necessary to preserve that method of government.

Pirenne felt that the disruption of trade in Europe greatly contributed to the development of feudalism. Marc Bloch examined the feudalism from the point of view of ties of dependence and argued that the bond of kinship progressively tightened with the development of feudalism. Duby called the rise of "feudalism as feudal revolution" which altered the entire social process. Lynn White Jr. put forward the view that the technology played a crucial role in shaping the feudal society. Perry Anderson considered feudalism as a more advanced system of generating agricultural productivity and agrarian surplus than the classical slave mode of production. He argued that it took the whole agrarian economy forward. The view of these and many other scholars will be further referred to in the next two Units also where we will discuss forms and structures, phases and decline of feudalism.

13.10 EXERCISES

1) Explain Pirenne's thesis about the rise of Feudalism in Europe.
2) Elaborate Marc Bloch's views on feudalism as a set of social conditions.
3) What do you understand by feudal revolution?
4) Give a brief account of the concept of feudalism as a mode of production.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 14 FEUDALISM: FORMS, STRUCTURES AND PHASES

Structure

14.1 Introduction
14.2 Lords, Vassals and Homage
14.3 Fiefs, Tenements and Allods
14.4 Manors
14.5 Knights, Tournaments and Chivalry
14.6 Phases of Feudalism
14.7 Summary
14.8 Exercises

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Feudalism was characterized in the first instance by the decay of the royal authority. There were three major waves of invasion into western Europe in the late ninth and early tenth centuries: one by the Norse who came by sea from Scandinavia and swept around the entire maritime boundary of Europe from Byzantium to Sicily to Normandy to the British Isles to Russia; one by the Magyars or Hungarians who came by land from the Balkans into northern Italy and southern Germany and France, and the last by the Saracens who came from Tunisia across the Mediterranean to Italy and parts of Spain. They came as plunderers, raiding and causing havoc before abandoning an area. Although the effects of the invasions varied in accordance with conditions in different parts of Europe, they succeeded in creating a general atmosphere of insecurity and instability as evident in depopulation, agricultural decline, and loss of wealth. The uniformity of government superimposed by the Carolingians proved to be superficial. Defence of the land – the original function of kingship – passed rapidly and irreversibly into the hands of the local potentates who consolidated their power amid the anarchy resulting from the dissolution of the Carolingian state. This consolidation could be accomplished only at the cost of the undermining and elimination of the small free peasant proprietors whom the Carolingians had made efforts to defend and promote. The feudal system was characterized by the appropriation by the seigneurial class, ecclesiastical and lay, of the entire surplus agricultural production achieved by the unclear peasant masses.

Complexities of this process were most developed in France and also, at a later stage, in Germany, but never completely worked out in Italy, where its development was checked by the persistence of traditions from the antiquity, and by the unusually early urban involvement of the landowners. It was even further from being complete in Spain, where the special conditions of the Reconquista gave the kings powers to limit those of the magnates. In England, in the Norman kingdom of Sicily, and in the Holy Land, the imported feudal system was more rigorous and sometimes closer to certain theoretical models than elsewhere, but its roots were also shallower. In the Slav lands local traditions produced considerable differences in the feudal pattern, and Scandinavia lacked a feudal system almost entirely. In spite of such extreme regional variations across Europe, it is possible to form a general idea about the social and institutional structures of the feudal societies. At one level, it entailed the legal disintegration of the realm into fragmentary dominions, thus making political subjection a matter of private contract. At another, it institutionalized and regularized the relationships of dependence which involved the unequal exchange of service and protection.

Feudal society had a hierarchical structure in which individuals had their designated positions. King was at the top of this structure who bestowed fiefs or estates on a number of lords. The lords distributed fiefs to a number of vassals who had their specified duties and obligations. The knights were at the bottom of this hierarchy and performed military duties. The whole system worked on strong bonds of personal loyalty and allegiance.

In this Unit, we will familiarize you with the position of Lords and Vassals and the nature of bonds between them. The nature of fiefs and tenements would be discussed. The conditions of cultivators and tenants with a manor will also be discussed. We will also introduce you to the institution of knights in the feudal set up and phases of feudalism.

14.2 LORDS, VASSALS AND HOMAGE

The legal complex of acts by which one free man placed himself in the protection of another was known as commendation. It involved a series of obligations binding on both parties. The person who commended himself was called a vassal and assumed the obligation of serving and respecting his superior, whom he called his lord, with the reservation that this service and respect was compatible with the maintenance of his status as a free man. The lord on his part agreed to assume the obligation of providing maintenance and protection to the vassal. The validity of commendation depended on the precise accomplishment of the formalities that accompanied these acts.

The primary rite of commendation was known as homage, which all classes performed during the Merovingian period but came to be limited under the Carolingian kings to the members of the aristocratic class. Two elements were comprised in the act of homage: immixito manuum (the rite in which the vassal, generally kneeling, bareheaded and unarmed, placed his clasped hands between the hands of his lord, who closed his own hands over them) and volo or the declaration of intention, whereby the placing of the vassal's person at the lord's disposition and the lord's acceptance of this surrender was verbally expressed.

Reflecting the improvement of the status of vassalage in the middle of the eighth century, the Carolingians added to the ceremony an oath of fealty (vasal's aknolwedgement of fidelity to his lord) to emphasize the fact that the vassals, now comprising the members of aristocracy, served as free men. The man would take the oath when he would rise from his knees after performing his act of homage and while standing, as befit a free man, swear to be loyal to his lord placing his hand on the Scriptures or on a casket containing holy relics. In fact, the lord might demand that his vassals repeat such oaths of fealty a number of times, particularly when he had reason to suspect their loyalty. The act of homage and oath of fealty were held binding until the death of one of the parties and, once the contract had been concluded, it could not be unilaterally denounced. In principle at least the contract of vassalage was regarded as one freely concluded between the two parties. The doing of homage and the taking an oath of fealty were fairly frequently accompanied, especially in France, by a ceremonial kiss (osculum), which was not only a spectacular way of confirming the obligations contracted by the two parties, but also lent dignity to the status of the vassal.

During the enfeoffment, usually following the act of homage and the oath of fealty, an act of investiture used to be performed symbolizing the transfer of the property right and the vassal's assumption of the obligations of administering the fief which he received on this occasion. The rite consisted in the handing over by the lord of some symbolic object to the vassal. In some cases the object was intended to signify the act of concession which was taking place, and the lord retained the object employed, which might be a sceptre, (a staff borne as symbol of personal sovereignty or imperial authority) wand (slender rod for carrying in hand or setting in ground) ring, knife, glove etc. in other cases the object remained in the vassal's hands and symbolized the fief itself. It might be a corn-stalk, a piece of earth or turf, a lance, a banner or a pastoral staff in the case of the investiture of imperial bishops in Germany and Italy before the Concordat of Worms, and so on. The ceremony of investiture represented the moment from which the vassal acquired his right in the fief which was henceforth to be legally protected against any violation. In the later feudal age, the ceremony of the renunciation of a fief was modelled on this rite, where the vassal formally divested himself of the fief by handing over the lord the same object which had been used for the original investiture.

The idea of fealty implied, in its negative aspect, the principal obligation of the vassal of abstaining from any act which might constitute a danger to the person, property and honour of his lord. The positive aspect of the vassal's duty was to render certain services to the lord usually classified as aid (auxilium) and counsel (consilium). Military service was the essential element in the category of aid. The lord possessed vassals in order that he might have soldiers at his disposal, and the institution had a distinctly military character. According to specific settlements, some vassals were bound to render personal service only, while others were bound to serve with a fixed number of knights, who would generally be their own vassals. From the eleventh century onwards, these quotas generally bore some relation to the importance of the fief held by the vassal. By that time, the vassals were also able to impose on the lords the conditions that they could only be held to a certain number of (often forty) days of service, beyond which the lord could only retain them by paying wages. In addition to its purely military aspect, the obligation of auxilium covered duties in the administration of the manor or in the lord's household, the carrying of messages, the providing of escorts, and rendering financial aid to the lord in case of need. The payment of the lord's ransom if he were captured, the knighting of his eldest son, the marriage of his eldest daughter, and his departure on a crusade were the most common occasions for such aids. Consilium indicated the obligation to give counsel imposed upon the vassal the duty of meeting with his lord, usually in company with the lord's other vassals, whenever the lord might summon him. Tradition limited such gatherings to two or three a year. One of the most important of this duty of counsel consisted of judging, under the presidency of the lord, the cases which came before the latter's court.

The lord, on the other hand, owed to his vassal the obligations of protection and maintenance. The first implied that the lord was bound to defend his vassal against the latter's enemies both in cases of unjust military attack and in a court of law. Generally, if the vassal had been granted a fief, the lord was bound as the grantee to warrant the vassal its possession by defending it against any attempts which might be made to deprive him of it. As far as maintenance was concerned, its primarily object, from the lord's point of view, was the necessity of making it possible for the vassal to provide the service, and in particular the military service, which he owed him. The lord might provide the maintenance either by keeping the vassal in his court and household or by granting him a fief. However, by the eleventh century most of the vassals were beneficed and not purely domestic, though the grant of a benefice did not necessarily exclude other forms of maintenance at the lord's expense.

The mutual obligations created by homage and fealty were of a personal character, and so could affect nobody outside the two contracting parties. No legal relationship was therefore recognized between the lord and the sub-vassal. A vassal might be bound to bring to his lord's service some or all of his own vassals, but the latter had no direct obligation towards their 'suzerain', as the lord of a lord came to be termed in late medieval France. There was, however, one important exception to this general rule. When a lord died without a certain heir, his vassals were regarded as the vassals of his lord until an heir to the deceased was legally established. In other words, the rights of a lord in the fiefs of his vassals necessarily reverted on his death without heirs to the lord of whom he ultimately held those fiefs.

Although in theory provisions of sanctions existed in the case of one party failing in his obligations, up to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries they were usually quite ineffective and in practice the conflicts which followed such breaches of agreement were most often settled by recourse to arms. Confiscation of the fief was of course a necessary consequence of the breach of fealty, since the grant of the fief was conditioned by the contract and obligations of vassalage. In reality, however, the progressive development of the rights of the vassal over his fief made confiscation difficult, and in twelfth century France the temporary 'seizure' or 'occupation' of the fief was developed as a less drastic sanction.

14.3 FIEFS, TENEMENTS AND ALLODS

The lord or the chief of a group of vassals could either keep the vassal in his own house and feed, clothe and equip him at his own expense, or he could endow him with an estate or a regular income derived from land and leave him to provide for his own maintenance. The tenure granted freely by a lord to his vassal in order to procure for the latter the maintenance which was his due and to provide him with the means of furnishing his lord with the services required by his contract of vassalage was termed as benefice or fief. Household vassals perhaps represented an older type of relationship than the beneficed vassals, but from the Carolingian period a great increase in the distribution of the benefices took place. This was the case because on the one hand, the regular provisioning of a fairly large group proved a rather difficult undertaking for the lord. On the other hand, many of the vassals needed independent revenues which, associated with the political authority they already exercised, would enable them to operate in conditions consistent with their prestige. Moreover, a vassus domincus was supposed to pass the greater part of his time in his province, exercising his supervisory functions.

A fief normally consisted of a landed estate, which could vary greatly in size. But a fief might also be some form of public authority, or a duty or right, including the right to tolls and market dues, the rights of minting and justice, the functions of advocate, mayor, provost, receiver, and so on. These fiefs which had no territorial basis but consisted in the right to certain payment made at regular intervals were known as 'money fiefs'. They existed in France, Germany and the Low Countries from the eleventh century onwards, but it was the English monarchy under the Normans and the Angevins that made the most extensive and systematic uses of such money fiefs. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the lay vassals often held churches – abbeys, parish churches, chapels – amongst their fiefs. This allowed them the profits of the tithe, the endowments of the church, and even in some cases the income arising from the spiritual offices themselves (offerings of the faithful, church dues etc.). One of the major objects of the eleventh century reform movements was the abolition of this kind of fief, and they were partially successful in checking and limiting the practice.

The nature of the rights enjoyed by the two parties, the lord and the vassal, did not remain the same across the centuries. The processes of patrimonialisation and subinfeudation considerably modified these rights. At the very beginning of the feudal period the lord held the ownership rights as envisaged in the Roman law, while the vassal was invested with rights corresponding to the Roman idea of usufruct which consisted merely of using and enjoying the fief and appropriating its produce. The situation began to change substantially from the ninth century as the effective occupation of the fief enabled the vassal to strengthen and buttress his real right over the land, and correspondingly, the power of the lord tended to decline. This was most evident in the way the fiefs came to be regarded as part of the patrimony or hereditary property of the vassals. Originally parcelled out as a form of life tenure that essentially represented a stipend, in theory the death of a vassal always brought the enfeoffment to an end and the legal rights of the lord over the fief revived in their entirety. Since vassalage was not transmitted by inheritance, the remuneration of the vassal could also not take on a hereditary character. But what generally occurred in practice was that an heir immediately occupied a fief left vacant by the predecessor from whom he hoped to inherit, and then addressed his request to the lord for investiture within a certain time limit determined by the local custom. The lords continually insisted on, but usually abstained from implementing, the principle of revocability. Because, in refusing the father's fief to the son the lord not only ran the risk of discouraging new commendations, he was also in the danger of provoking a serious reaction from his other vassals who nurtured similar expectations. In western France and Burgundy, as an upshot of the early weakening of the royal power, the benefices formed out of public offices were among the first to become hereditary. The process was relatively rapid and widespread in the whole of France, and rather slow and arrested in Germany and north Italy, and became general in England only in the twelfth century. Nevertheless, by the end of the twelfth century the investiture of the son in succession to the father acquired a legal status almost everywhere.

Inheritance of Fiefs

As long as the inheritance of fiefs had not become an established custom, the lord could demand some recompense from the aspiring candidate before admitting him as a vassal to fealty and homage and investing him with the fief. The payment which the lord exacted on this account was commonly known as 'relief', which could vary – depending upon the importance of the particular fief in question – from a horse and the equipment of a knight to one year's revenue of the fief. The ecclesiastical tenements, however, were free from the seigneurial exactions arising out of the lord's occasional rights connected with a breach of the continuity of possession. In the case of a fief descending by hereditary succession to a minor, either the nearest relative of the heir became a vassal of the lord and having been invested with the fief saw to the upkeep and education of the heir during his minority, or the lord himself was permitted by custom to take over the fief for the time being and enjoy its usufruct, on condition of providing for the maintenance and education of the minor heir. However, in both cases the child had the right, on attaining his majority, of demanding to be allowed to do homage and take the oath of fealty and so obtain for himself the investiture of the fief. Although originally women were entirely excluded from any right of feudal succession, by the end of the tenth century numerous cases of female succession were being admitted. In southern France and the Low Countries the custom came to be accepted at a relatively early date than it was in Germany.

It was the growing patrimonialisation of the fief that considerably resisted the legal idea of a fief being an indivisible right, and thus accelerated the process of subinfeudation. According to Ganshof, the more a vassal came to regard a fief as one of the elements in his personal fortune, the more he regarded it as natural that, like any other family possession, all his children should benefit from it. Consequently, the practice of partitioning fiefs was gradually established over the greater part of France and Germany, although in England the custom of male primogeniture was predominant. Along with indivisibility, the principle of inalienability also lost its force. With the property element in the complex of feudal relationship becoming increasingly preponderant, the engagements and obligations attached to property rights ceased to be personal services and instead became attached to alienable property which might be sold to the highest bidder. Originally, the subinfeudation of all or part of the fief was certainly not permitted to the vassal without the lord's authorization. But from the tenth century onwards in France, from the eleventh in Germany and after the Norman Conquest in England, cases of the gift or sale of fiefs by vassals seem to have been generally and freely practised without any intervention on the lord's part. Initially, the vassal would have to resign his fief into the hands of his lord, who would then invest the new candidate with it after having received his fealty and homage. But eventually such complicated rites of resignation and re-investiture came to be abandoned since the lords could no more effectively oppose the alienation of fiefs. Nevertheless, the lord retained the right of exacting a payment on the occasion of a change of holder, and their explicit consent was still considered as essential. The lord's right of pre-emption, that is, his right to substitute himself if he wished for the purchaser by paying him back the price which he had paid for the fief, was also safeguarded. However, the right of disposal eventually became much more restricted in the case of the lord than it had in that of the vassal.

Before the end of the ninth century multiple vassalage came into practice. The practice of a vassal doing homage to several lords became rampant in France in the tenth and in Germany in the eleventh centuries. Several attempts were made to prevent this plurality of allegiance from too seriously weakening the binding force of the tie of dependence. Among them most significant was the system of liegeancy that by the end of the eleventh century was widespread in France, England, southern Italy and parts of Germany. In this system, it was recognised that there was one among the multiple lords of a vassal who must be served with the full strictness of early vassalage. This lord was called the liege lord who usually provided the largest benefice to the vassal. Gradually, however, even liege homage got multiplied.

Fief involved an obligation of service which contained a very definite element of professional specialisation and individual action. In this respect, it was sharply distinct from the villein tenement which was burdened with labour services and rents in kind. The usual villein tenement, ranging between ten to thirty acres, was distributed in scattered acre-strips in the two or three open- fields of the manor. These holdings were deemed in law to be at the will of the lord, but in practice were often protected by the local custom and generally subjected to quasi-legal rules of possession and inheritance on the payment of a tax.

Allods

While feudal tenure – the villein tenements and the fiefs — was certainly the most common mode of holding land, it was not the only form of real property rights. There were the ‘allods’, which remained independent to a significant degree owing to the porous and limited nature of the feudal network of dependent ties. The allodial right was one of complete ownership, not subject to any conditions of service or payment. While from the tenth century onwards, the feudal tenure rapidly spread at the expense of the allodial rights, the latter continued to survive particularly in southern France and Germany. Marc Bloch argues that in the countries where feudalism was an importation it was much more systematically organized than in those where its development had been more deeply rooted in local traditions. Hence, neither in Syria nor in England the allod was permitted. All land was held of a lord and this unbroken chain led link by link to the king. For most of Europe, however, independent peasant holdings were common enough. It must be clarified that they did not fully escape the economic exploitation of the seigneurial class who controlled the local markets and the regional economy as a whole. Frequently, the allodialists had to pay levies directly or indirectly through an intermediary. Their small individual or collective scale also made their economies vulnerable to the vagaries of the predominant feudal economy.

14.4 MANORS

The fundamental unit of economic production as well as social life in the feudal order was the manor. A manor was first and foremost an agglomeration of small dependent farms directly subjected to the authority of a lord and farmed by serfs or peasant cultivators bound to the soil. Its origins can be traced back to the Roman institution of *colonate* or *villae* continuing to survive in Frankish Gaul and Italy in a recognizable form. But the acquisition of new powers by the manors through the fusion of different kinds of tenures and the transference of many allods to the control of a powerful individual coincided only with the development of the feudal nexus. Manors expanded both by force and contracts.

The estates were relatively small clearings among large stretches of forest and wastelands. In a characteristic manor the village was composed of peasant households clustered together in crude homes around the nucleus of a church, grist and stone mill, blacksmith shop, winepress, bakery and other facilities.

Though the manorial village was not entirely self-sufficient since certain essential commodities like salt or metal-ware had to be obtained from outside sources, most of the daily needs of the peasants could be met with the goods produced within the manor. However, purchases had to be made outside the village, sometimes at long distances away, for catering to the needs of the lord and his family. The village was usually located in the centre of the arable land, somewhere near the most convenient water supply. Peasants as a rule lived, worked and died within the lord's estate and were buried in the village churchyard. The world of the medieval peasant was essentially the world and experience of the manor estate.

In stark contrast to the dark, damp and windowless single-roomed peasant homes made of mud brick and straw stood the lord's spacious castle or the large and well-defended manor house. Although the invasions were contained and eventually defeated in the course of the tenth century, the anxiety of lords to preserve, consolidate and expand their lordships led to small-scale arms races with neighbours. Wars were fought for plunder as well as conquest. The essential elements for the attacker were surprise and mobility, while the effective response for the defender was to keep wealth and human resources in well- fortified and well-garrisoned places. Campaigns were by and large limited to the months immediately before the harvest and wasting the countryside was considered an effective ploy to bring pressure on the enemy. Particularly the high middle ages saw expensive developments in the construction of fortifications. When a rival lord attacked a manor, the peasants usually found protection inside the walls of the castle.

The rest of the manor typically consisted of the arable (utilized by two or three-field rotation system), the meadowland (necessary to feed the draught animals) and the wasteland (used for summer pasture for animals of the whole manor and also providing wood, nuts, berries, honey, rabbits to the community). Farmland was generally divided into strips of ploughed land, worked communally by the peasants. Crops and peasant holdings were thus scattered in the different fields of the manor. Surrounding agricultural land lay mostly open fields, forests and wasteland, and a large amount of land known as the commons — land open to all to graze their animals on, gather firewood from, trap, fish and hunt from.

The majority of the manorial population was a vast body of servile peasantry of diverse origins, although over the course of the centuries the traces of the distinction mostly disappeared for all practical purposes. The word 'serf' was used to denote the lowest stratum of this body – who were not simply tenants of land which they did not own, but legally had no freedom of movement, of buying and selling land and commodities, of disposing of their own labour, of marrying and founding a family, and of leaving property to their heirs. In reality a *villein* had little difference from a serf though he was supposed to enjoy the privileges of a freedman except in his relationship to his lord against whom he had no civil claims. One source of feudal serfdom undoubtedly was the slavery of the ancient world and the Dark Ages. When the Roman landowners began to parcel out vast portions of their former *latifundia*, which had ceased to be profitable under direct exploitation, they allotted a certain number of indivisible tenements (*mansi*) to their slaves in exchange for tithes on crops, service in the lord's own fields and various other types of dues. The control of social justice and the offer of 'protection' were also used to reduce free peasants to servitude, making them hereditarily bound to their tenements and liable to arbitrary levies and labour services. Poor harvests and flight from the invaders of course led some freemen to surrender their liberty, but the pressure from above was probably more powerful than the consent from below. As David Whitton points out, the most rapid subjection of the peasantry came not in the tenth century, the period of maximum volatility, but rather in the eleventh when harvests were improving.

The servile peasantry was bound to fulfil several obligations for the lord. Every villein household had to send a labourer to do work on the lord's farm for about half the number of days in the week. The principal of the many requirements of the demesne was ploughing the fields belonging to the lord, and for such ploughing the villein had not only to appear personally as a labourer, but to bring his oxen and plough as well. In the same way the villeins had to go through the work of harrowing with their harrows, and of carrying the harvest in their wains and carts. Carrying duties, in carts and on horseback, were also distributed. Then came innumerable varieties of manual work for the erection and keeping up of hedges, the preservation of dykes, canals, ditches and roads, the thrashing and garnering of corn, the tending and shearing of sheep and so forth. Exceedingly burdensome services were required at times of mowing and reaping. The villein, besides being tied to the soil (which meant that he could not leave the manor without the lord's consent), was subject to the servile fine of 'merchet' (*formariage*) on his daughter's marriage and to the exaction of his best beast as 'heriot' (*mainmorte*) or inheritance tax. He had to gain the consent of the lord as well as pay a small fee before his marriage. A lord could also select a wife for his serf and force him to marry her. Moreover, there were other substantial dues to be paid to the lord: the annual *capitation* or head tax (literally, a tax on existence), the *taille* (a money levy on the serf's property), and the *heriot* (an inheritance tax). Lastly, medieval serfs paid a number of *banalities* which were taxes paid to use the lord's mills, ovens and presses. As far as the clergy was concerned, the villeins had to render hens, eggs, wax, and other special payments to them on several occasions besides paying the regular tax of *tithe* for the upkeep of the church.

While it was assumed that everything a villein possessed was the property of his lord and liable to be resumed by him, there existed a considerable section of freeholders within the manor. These were the tenants who stood to the lord in a relation of definite agreement, paying certain fixed rents or performing certain specified services which, though burdensome, did not amount to the general obligation of rural labour incumbent on the villeins. The freeholders could seek and in some cases obtain protection for their rights in the royal courts and thereby acquired a privileged position in regard to holdings, dues and services vis-à-vis the villeins. However, the legal distinction between the tenants in a relation of contract with their Lord and the tenants in a relation of customary subjection must not be overstated. The freeholders had not only to take part in the management of the manorial village community but also to conform to its decisions. They were not free in the sense of being able to use their plots as they liked, to manage their arable and pasture in severalty, to keep up a separate and independent husbandry. If they transgressed against the rules laid down by the community, they were liable to pay fines. Dues of all kinds, indeed, pressed equally on the villeins and the freemen. Both sections joined to frame the by-laws and to declare the customs that ruled the life of the village and its intricate economic practices.

Here it is necessary to point out that over time an internally differentiated body of manorial staff grew, often out of the class of the villeins and freeholders, to ensure efficient management of the manorial economy. This staff comprised the stewards and seneschals who had to act as overseers of the whole, to preside in the manorial courts, to keep accounts, to represent the lord on all occasions; the reeves who acted as a kind of intermediary between the villagers and the lord and led the organization of rural services; the beadles and radknights or radmen who had to serve summonses and to carry orders; the various warders, such as the hayward, who superintended hedges, the woodward for pastures and wood, the sower and the thrasher; the graves of moors and dykes who looked after canals, ditches and drainage; the ploughmen and herdsmen, employed for the use of the demesne's plough-teams and herds. It was in the interest of the lord himself to strengthen the customary order which prevented the powerful intermediaries from ruining the peasantry by extortion and arbitrary rule. From the twelfth century this led to the enrolments of custom as to holdings and services. They constituted a safeguard for the interests both of the tenants and of the lord. This growth of the manorial staff was surely indicative of the emerging differentiation within the peasantry.

14.5 KNIGHTS, TOURNAMENTS AND CHIVALRY

However, "the agents of the seigneurial exploitation" – the phrase is Georges Duby's – were the knights. A knight was essentially a mounted warrior in the service of his liege-lord. Using the speed and momentum of a charge, the horse could trample his rider's enemies and the rider could use the long lance to injure his foes while he remained out of reach of their weapons. Then, with all speed, the knight could ride off, only to return for another deadly attack. This technique had the most devastating effect when the cavalry worked together in formation. The horse-mounted soldier was therefore of immense significance to an army and of great value to the lords during the period when kingdoms and estates struggled to survive in the face of constant threat of invasion by nomadic tribes and aggressive neighbours. They garrisoned the castle in rotation and all rallied to its defence in time of danger. They were frequently used also in intimidating and forcing peasants into paying dues etc. The position of the feudal knights was far more socially buttressed than their Roman predecessors, the *equites*.

A boy destined for knighthood had to undergo a long and careful training. At the age of seven he was taken from his mother's keeping, and sent to the castle of one of the great nobles to be educated with the lord's own children and other high-born boys. Hence the duty of respecting God and the ladies was at once impressed upon him by the women of the household, whom he served as a page. Masters taught him some book learning, Latin and foreign languages, knowledge of music, singing, and the art of making rhymes. Great value was placed upon good manners, as courtesy was one of the most essential characteristics of a knight. Even lighter accomplishments, such as dancing and playing at chess, tables and other games, were not despised. Physical culture was, however, the most important part of his training. From the age of fourteen, when he was promoted to the rank of a squire, he was gradually taught to use knightly weapons, to bear the weight of knightly armour, to ride, to jump, to wrestle, to swim, to hunt, to hawk, to joust, and to endure the utmost fatigues of all kinds. Squires were supposed to attend their lord in his chamber, to serve in the hall, to taste his food or bear his cup, to keep charge of his horse and arms. Expert squires also attended their lords in battle, and took charge of his prisoners. In a few cases, young men completed their chivalric education by travelling, going to tournaments, and studying customs in other lands. Usually at the age of twenty-one, the knight bachelor was accoladed.

From the end of the tenth century, along with hunting deer or wild boar and falconry tournaments began to emerge as the major amusement of the knights, which was also a way for warriors to practise working together and rehearse their combat skills. For the knights looking for service, they provided a proving ground as well. Frequently legal disputes were settled after the contestants had asked God to grant victory to the righteous. The tourney proper was an encounter between two bodies of knights while the joust was a one-on-one combat. Usually they fought in enclosures before an audience. The opponents were not necessarily enemies. They often fought for the honour of their ladies or their lieges, or to gain renown in arms for themselves. No one who had injured the Church, been false to his lord, fled without cause from the battlefield, made a false oath, committed an outrage on a woman, engaged in trade, or could not prove his descent from a noble family was to be allowed to take part in a tournament. The conqueror was entitled to the armour, weapons and horse of the vanquished, and could also demand a ransom for his person. In the early tourneys no particular safeguard used to be taken for preventing deaths. The armours and weapons that were employed in the real battlefield were also used in the tournaments. However, the mounting financial and human losses that the tournaments involved and their potential for breeding political conspiracies worried the princes and the kings. The Church actively tried to ban the dangerous amusement and even threatened to refuse Christian burial to any knight killed in a tourney. But the institution had already evolved into a grand popular spectacle with the heralds announcing it to the public weeks in advance, colourful processions and evening banquets accompanying it. Prizes were introduced. The minstrels entertained the crowd. Merchants frequently organised small fairs to attract the numerous visitors. Therefore, rather than prohibiting tournaments, various measures were developed to bring them under control. The licensing system in England, devised by Richard I in 1192, was one such attempt. Restrictions were also put on the dangerous form of combat practice. The joust, where two mounted knights raced towards each other in a test of skill and nerve, was more and more encouraged to test the horsemanship and weapons skill of the individual knight. As part of the safety measures, certain special contrivances such as blunt-tipped lances, coronals, tilt barriers and more protective armours, gradually evolved.

The tournaments immensely contributed to the fashioning of the idealized code of conduct for medieval knights which was known as chivalry. Derived from the French word 'cheval' (horse), the word gradually became associated with 'chevalier' (mounted warrior). It exalted courage and courtesy in battle, generosity to one's inferiors and loyalty to one's lord. Bravery, often verging on the border of complete recklessness, was the fundamental quality in the chivalric code. Even the slightest insult was to be avenged by blood and no knight could afford any suspicion of cowardice or treachery. Honour required that he never failed his lord or avoided a challenge. The true knight also disdained all tricks in battle and was not supposed to strike an unarmed or unprepared enemy. If defeated or captured, he could expect honourable treatment until he was ransomed. Gradually, the involvement of the Church in the Crusades added love of God and the defence of the Christian principles to the code of chivalry. By the twelfth century, the meaning of chivalry was expanded to include courtesy towards women and protection of the defenceless. Although it was held that a knight ought to help all ladies to the utmost of his power, especially if they had been deprived of their rights, or were in distress of any kind, he was expected to choose one as the special object of his attraction. To win her grace, or to enhance her reputation, he sought adventures, and fought for her both in war and tournaments. As the famous medieval ballads *Mort d'Arthur, Chanson de Roland and Amadis de Gaul* testify, the marvellous adventures and romantic love of the knights became the favourite themes of the poems of the troubadours and the minnesingers. However, chivalry might be understood more as a normative guide of knightly behaviour than as a true reflection of what the knights actually did. With the development of firearms in the thirteenth century the importance of cavalry and knightly armours and weapons remarkably declined. In the changed context of the growing commercial and urban culture knighthood increasingly became an obsolete order both in terms of efficiency and expense. Chivalry was transformed into a code of gentlemanly manners in polite society.

14.6 PHASES

In order to appreciate the complexities of the social and economic life in medieval Europe feudalism has to be treated more as an evolving process than as a static structure. The idea of two evolutionary phases in feudalism owes much to the pioneering research of Marc Bloch. According to him, the first phase, which began with the establishment of the barbarian successor states on the collapsed political system of the Roman Empire and lasted until the middle of the eleventh century, substantially preserved the basic social relations which characterized the late Empire. This phase corresponds to the organization of a fairly stable rural territory where trade was insignificant and uncommon, coins were rare, and a wage-earning class almost non-existent. Ties of vassalage between the greater and lesser elements hierarchically linked the territorial aristocracies who monopolized both the social means of coercion and the regulation of jurisdiction. Most of the peasants were either completely unfree in the eyes of the law or so dependent in various ways on their lords that, if they were free, their freedom was a mere formality. In this phase the agrarian economy was producing very little surplus beyond what was necessary to support the power and position of the landed aristocracy. Production for market was low; rents tended to be in labour or in kind; there was little money in circulation; and there was little effective demand for the luxury commodities of international trade since upper-class incomes were received in produce rather than in cash. Consequentially, western European life was predominantly rural and localized.

The second phase, from the mid-eleventh to the early fourteenth century, was the result of the substantial growth of population, the great land clearances, the considerable technical progress, the revival of trade, the diffusion of a monetary economy, and the growing social superiority of the merchant over the producer. During this period, Bloch argues, the evolution of society and the evolution of economy began to move in opposite directions: the former, which was slowing down, tended to hone the class structure into closed groups, while the latter, which was accelerating, eventually led to freedom from serfdom and the relaxation of restrictions on trade and commerce. In the specific context of Maconnais, Georges Duby places the turning point a century later, about 1160 from when an increase in the agricultural surplus facilitated a greater involvement in the network of a monetary economy, an increasing differentiation between urban and rural conditions, and various forms of the general social upheaval. Jacques Le Goff points out that the shift from the first to the second feudal age was a remarkably slow and stretched-out process, and was not evenly or simultaneously accomplished across western Europe.

14.7 SUMMARY

The feudal system had its own specific forms and structures. The feudal ties involved a series of obligations binding on Lords, Vassals and peasants. Homage and the acknowledgement of obligation of fidelity to lord was the governing principle. The fief in the form of a landed estate was of varying size. It was also in the form of public authority or a duty or right. Elaborate rules governed the inheritance of fiefs where lords had their defined powers. The peasantry within a manor had a sort of stratification some enjoying rights and others completely subjugated. The cultivators were subjected to heavy land tax and various cesses. The institution of knights evolved out of the need for armed power to protect the manors and suppress dissent inside it. While going through this Unit you must have noticed that the form and structure of feudalism was not uniform in the whole of Europe and there were significant variations in different regions which were pointed out during our discussion.

14.8 EXERCISES

1) What were the rights and obligations of Lords and Vassal in feudatory relations?
2) What was the nature of fief? How was it inherited? How did it change?
3) Analyze the conditions of different kinds of cultivators in a manor.
4) Who were knights? What was their significance in a feudal set up?

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 15 TRADE AND THE DECLINE OF FEUDALISM

Structure

15.1 Introduction

15.2 General Debate on the Decline

15.3 Technology and Productivity of Land and Labour

15.4 Growth of Urban Centres

15.5 Transformation of Rural Scenario

15.6 Other Views on Decline

15.7 Summary

15.8 Exercises

15.1 INTRODUCTION

In Units 13 and 14, we discussed some important elements of feudalism in Europe which must have provided you a fairly good understanding of the feudal system in Europe. You must have also noticed that in the 14th century gradual decline of feudalism began and in due course of time it came to an end as a dominant system in Europe. Here, in this Unit, we will focus our discussion on the process of decline of feudalism with special attention being paid to the role of trade in it. There has been considerable debate and difference of opinion among scholars on this issue.

Revival and expansion of trade and consequent growth of towns has been conceived by some scholars as the dominant cause for the decline of feudalism. Level of technology, agricultural productivity, demographic changes and transformation of rural scenario are some other issues which were considered important factors which contributed to the decline of feudalism in varying degrees. In this Unit, we will analyse all these views to understand the process of decline. Our aim here is not to identify any one view as the primary cause but put before you the whole range of debate pertaining to the question of decline of feudalism. It is not possible to include the views of all the scholars who have worked on this theme therefore we have selected the main views only. The major scholars whose views have been included in this Unit are Henri Pirenne, Maurice Dobb, Kochuru Takahashi, Guy Bois, Marc Bloch, Georges Duby, Paul Sweezy and Robert Brenner.

15.2 GENERAL DEBATE ON THE DECLINE

The centrality of trade in both the rise of feudalism and its decline was established by the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne in the 1920s and 30s in his books, *Medieval Cities: Their Origin and the Revival of Trade, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* and *Mahomet and Charlemagne.* For Pirenne, long distance trade, or 'grand trade' as he called it, was the driving force of all flourishing civilizations and its disruption, for whatever reason, brought the onward march of civilization to a halt.

It was thus that European civilization in Antiquity had attained glorious heights owing to trade across the Mediterranean, for it was not only an economic motor of society, but became the conduit for the cross fertilization of ideas and cultures across long distances. Once trans-Mediterranean trade was disrupted by the Muslim-Arab invasions in the seventh century, and the Arab capture of crucial entry points to the Sea in both the East (Alexandria) and the West (Gibraltar) and the control of Sardinia in the middle, the European economy turned inwards and was ruralised; consequently it became sluggish, even as petty trade continued in pockets. Pirenne called it 'the break up of the economic equilibrium of the ancient world'. This also signalled the end of urban life, which could only be sustained by long distance trade, and the end of great ideas travelling long distances; life became dull. This was feudalism. However, the Crusades in the 11th century pushed the Arabs back into the Middle East, their homelands, and Europe was thus liberated. 'Grand trade' was revived and urban centres came to life once again. This marked the beginning of the end of feudalism. He quotes the saying 'city life makes a man free' to emphasize the transformation.

Pirenne thus established a fundamental dichotomy between feudalism and trade; one was irreconcilable with the other. This was a watershed in conceptualizing European feudalism and became the centre point of emulation and discussion among historians for a long time. Its influence spread far beyond Europe's boundaries and the feudalism/trade dichotomy formed the basis of the construction of the notion of Indian feudalism, for example, and the one in the Near East (developed by E. Ashtor); both follow its contours almost to the last detail.

In some fundamental ways Pirenne's thesis altered history-writing altogether by widening its canvas so extensively as to encompass the whole society, whereas hitherto only small scale, particular causes were sought out to explain the rise and decline of feudalism. One theory in the nineteenth century even traced the origin of feudalism to the horse stirrup! The discussion of the Pirenne thesis understandably led to its questioning, and ultimately its complete rejection, especially its centre piece, the trade/feudalism dichotomy.

Among the most serious challenges to the thesis was posed by a Marxist economic historian of the rise of capitalism, Maurice Dobb at the University of Cambridge. In 1946 he published *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, in which he began by examining the decline of feudalism. The question of trade was crucial for his examination. As a Marxist he would not accept trade as the autonomous agent in the working of an economic system. Trade on its own, for him, did not have the force to alter any economic system, for it could subsist with any and all of these, be it slavery, feudalism, capitalism, or any other. It would remain subservient to what he called the system's 'internal articulation', i.e. inherent class struggle. To elaborate this view, he recalled Frederick Engels' nineteenth century observation that far from dissolving feudal relations, the revival of trade in Eastern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to 'the second serfdom' there. Serfdom was for Marxists like Dobb the very hallmark of feudalism. Trade and feudalism were in his view thus quite compatible with each other.

What then in Dobb's perception caused the decline of West European feudalism was its 'internal crisis', a mode of analysis very dear to Marxists. The eleventh century Crusaders who pushed the Arabs back into the Near East went chasing them right into their home territories. There they were introduced to the hitherto unheard of Oriental luxuries, like perfumes, silks and spices etc. Having performed their duties as religiously fired crusaders, they now turned traders and sold these luxurious items back home to European aristocrats at fabulous prices. The introduction of Oriental luxuries to the West gravely altered the cultural and economic scenario, for the aristocracy began to long for them and would pay any price. If this longing encouraged low volume high value trade between Western Europe and the Middle East, it created a crisis of resources at home. For, the incomes of the class of landlords had become inelastic because the productivity of land – the chief source of income – had reached a plateau because of the 'low level of technology'. Thus the demands, and therefore the expenditure, of this class were rising, but the incomes remained static. There was however one mode of raising resources: squeezing the peasant further. The peasant in the agricultural economy being the primary producer of wealth could still be squeezed an extra bit to yield that extra money.

Here Dobb introduces another factor, which he shares with Pirenne: the revival of the city. Yet, if Pirenne links this phenomenon with the revival of trade, Dobb does not establish any causal links. He just seems to assume that the city was rising in Western Europe of its own will. The city in turn provided alternative avenues of employment to the increasingly impoverished peasant; inevitably, the flight of the peasant from the countryside to the city to escape the rising demands of the landlord was the form class struggle took in this case. Indeed, there was a three-way class struggle: between the lords and the serfs and between the lords and the urban bourgeoisie which was increasingly occupying economic space that was alternative to the feudal mode of production. The flight of the impoverished peasant from the countryside left the landlords helpless and it was thus that feudalism collapsed. If trade had any role in it, it was entirely subordinate to class struggle between the serf and the lord. The city and the urban bourgeoisie aided the process of the decline.

Basically then Dobb was questioning the Pirennean feudalism/trade dichotomy and instead establishing compatibility between the two.

The publication of *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* led to an international debate with resonances still not quite silenced. The book was reviewed by another eminent Marxist economist of the USA, Paul Sweezy. Sweezy by and large upheld the Pirennean thesis and the trade/feudalism incompatibility. Dobb responded to it. The debate was joined by other chiefly Marxist scholars from as far as Japan. Kochuru Takahashi, Japanese historian, was the one who introduced yet another facet to the debate by pointing out that capitalism did not arise from the debris of feudalism through the agency of the rising bourgeoisie alone; as in the case of Japan after the Meiji restoration, the State, and not the Capitalist class, became the agency for creating capitalist economy there, a view that was greatly appreciated by the other participants. The whole debate was published under the title 'The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism' in 1952. Later on others joined in and a new volume with the same title was edited by R.H.Hilton and published again in 1978. The central problem in the debate still remained the role of trade and town in the decline of feudalism. The new edition had an additional contribution from John Merrington which specifically dealt with the varying views about town and country in the transition to Capitalism. Merrington does not give a 'yes' or 'no' answer and traces the history of the 'yes' or 'no' answers given by others; himself, he is inclined towards denying to town and trade the chief agency of the dissolution of feudalism. The extensive debate showed decisively that there was not one, single Marxist view and that Marxists were as capable of holding differences among themselves as with others.

If Dobb argued for the compatibility of trade and feudalism, another Marxist historian from France, Guy Bois, went a step further and established a causal link between the two, though he was not directly participating in the debate. In fact his book appeared first in his native French and then in English translation long after the debate had occurred. In his book, *The transformation of the year one thousand: The village of Lournand from antiquity to feudalism*, he examines one village in transition in France at the date that conventionally marks the break and notices that development of trade, far from weakening the feudal ties of lord and peasant there, was actually reinforcing them. Unlike Dobb, he does not take his lead from Engels and does not study Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century to make his point; on the contrary he concentrates on the land that formed the heart of feudalism and around the date when feudalism had reached its highest point.

However, even as the debate on the question of trade as the dissolvent of feudalism raged, and the participants often appeared divided on two sides of the fence, there was yet a considerable number of shared assumptions among them. Pirenne's low opinion of the level of technology and productivity of land and labour in medieval Europe, was shared by Dobb, Hilton and others. Also common between them was the view that the town was the critical element in the dissolution of feudalism and that town was external to the feudal system. If, as stated above, Pirenne gives us a reason for the revival of urbanization, Dobb does not do even that; he just assumes that urbanization must have occurred somehow, and having once occurred it acted as a magnet to the impoverished peasantry as a source of succour and shelter. It is time to examine both these propositions about 'low technology' and the town as the extraneous dissolvent of feudalism.

15.3 TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF LAND AND LABOUR

Whether technology is low or high is a purely relative question, relative to time and to space. Technology in any sector, or even in general, might be high or low relative to an earlier or later epoch in another space; or else, it might be low or high in relation to the same region at another point of time. For instance, the level of technology in the twentieth century in general can be said to be much higher than say in the fifteenth century around the globe, just as the level of technology in the automobile or the pharmaceutical sector can be said to be high in the U.S. than in Africa. In other words, technology is not low or high by itself. Secondly, technology is never static, though it might appear so in a short term context; it constantly keeps evolving in each and all sectors over time even in the same region. By assuming the low level of technology in medieval Europe, both Pirenne and Dobb lost sight of the enormous changes taking place in the long period encompassed.

It is thus that production technology, which basically raises the productivity of labour – and in the sphere of agriculture, of land – was steadily evolving in medieval Europe, though the pace of its evolution stretched it out over what to us appear as very long durations, sometimes running into decades and even centuries. The long stretches of evolution leave us with the impression of changelessness. Since land was the primary means of creating wealth, and labour its chief instrument, an overview of changes in technology and productivity in this arena would demonstrate its enormous dynamism.

In what is termed as the early Middle Ages –fifth to eighth or ninth centuries – in most of Southern Europe and the region around the Mediterranean, which is the most fertile because of the prolonged sunshine, the seed:yield ratio was about 1:1.6 or at the most 1:2.5. That is for a seed of 10 Kilograms, the field returned at the most 25 kilograms of yield. Of this 10 Kgs had to be reserved as seed for the next year's crop, leaving just about 15 Kgs for consumption. The technology that was in use here was simple: a light plough scratched the surface of the soil, and was thus known as the scratch plough, or araire. This left the deeper fertility of the soil unutilized, for the soil there remained hard and would resist the spread of the roots of the seedling. This also necessitated large fields and a lot of manual labour input. On the other hand, the sunshine in the area lasted some four months in the year; hence all agricultural processes had to be carried out during this period. It was thus that there was constant tension at all levels in society over the demand for labour.

This was the setting for the evolution of agricultural technology. Heavy plough, the *charrue*, 3-field rotation in place of 2-field rotation, crop rotation, new crops like peas and beans which formed a better diet in that they provide vegetable proteins and whose roots left behind nitrogen fertiliser in the soil making it ready for another crop of a different kind, better harness of the plough yoke on the draught animal like the bull, increasing use of the horse for draught etc. etc. all raised the fertility of land and labour substantially by the 12th century. By then the average seed:yield ratio stood at 1:4, which actually doubled the amount of surplus available for consumption. Thus to take our earlier example, with the new ratio, consumable amount available from a seed of 10 Kgs would be 30 Kgs. There were other technological innovations too: the watermill and later the windmill took over many manual tasks and spared human energy for agricultural production. With more food available and better quality of diet, population too rose very substantially even as the amount of land required for providing food for each family declined because of higher productivity. The rising populace migrated out of the old established villages in search of virgin land. The twelfth century is the century of both what Georges Duby has called 'agricultural progress' and massive migrations into the heavily forested eastern German lands which were brought under the plough. The first migrations thus occurred within the countryside and not from the village to the city. Equally significantly, the march to this agricultural expansion was led by the peasant.

But this technology was capital intensive. It gave great advantage to those strata of peasants who could afford to invest in the heavy plough etc.; it also gave them much higher returns on their investment. The gap within the class of peasantry, always present, began to grow. The very small peasant also began to invest his and his family labour and whatever savings he could manage in, say, growing a vegetable crop on his small field to sell it in the growing market and make some small gain. Sometimes he did manage to; at others, one crop failure and he lost the last resource and turned into a landless labourer. Of course the demand for labour, land and produce was also growing and the market was increasingly determining the patterns of production in the field. This was the process of differentiation within the peasantry that proved crucial for the decline of feudalism. We shall return to this point below. Before we do that, let us consider the role of the city on the decline of feudalism.

15.4 GROWTH OF URBAN CENTRES

Where did the medieval city come from? For Pirenne its origin lay in the revival of the grand trade across Europe. For Dobb, this is not a relevant question. But for both, the city remained extraneous to the feudal economy. Was it?

As we have briefly seen above, the face of the countryside was changing substantially, as the great historian of feudalism, Marc Bloch, had emphasized in his *Feudal Society*, and Georges Duby after him. The essence of this change lay in higher productivity and greater amount of production, availability of more and better food, growth of population at the lower rungs of society, growth of marketable surplus in the countryside and therefore growth of the market. All this allows sustenance of a higher level of urban population than was the case in the early medieval centuries. Thus the growth of cities is organically linked to developments in the countryside rather than in opposition to it.

Whether and to what extent did the rise of the urban centres contribute to the decline of feudalism remains debatable. While eminent historians like Pirenne, Dobb and Sweezy highlight the role, others dispute it. The phenomenal growth of towns in the thirteenth to the fifteenth century was yet incapable of absorbing more than about 10 per cent of the total population. Even as centres of production, their share in the economy was far from preponderant or decisive. Several historians have questioned the significance of the town as an influential factor in providing subsistence to fleeing rural populace or the extent of this flight; according to them the countryside still remained ‘overpopulated’ and that the number of large cities even in Flanders (parts of the modern Belgian-Netherlands-Luxemburg area), industrially and economically the most advanced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, placed an unnatural economic burden on the countryside. Among several others, Robert Brenner, who initiated a major debate on the question of transition from feudalism to capitalism in the 1970s, questions the extent of rural migration to urban areas.

Historians have also opened even the role of economic liberation of the peasant attributed to the town to question. First, if the urban income levels for the rural migrants were higher, so too was the cost of living. Urban employment was thus not always an economic advantage to them and did not always function as an effective ‘pull factor’. More important, it was more advantageous for the urban bourgeoisie to exploit cheap rural labour in the countryside itself where the cost of living and wages were lower and workers’ guilds were absent. Besides, in the village the labour of the entire family of the worker could be exploited through contractual labour, whereas in the town the worker laboured alone along with other similarly placed individuals. The fourteenth century thus saw the shifting of industrial production on behalf of urban merchants to rural areas first in Flanders and then elsewhere in Western Europe. This phenomenon came to be designated as Proto-industrialization (Pi) in the 1970s and 80s. There is evidence too that the peasants were also forced by the cities in Flanders to bring grains to them at cheap rates.

The flight of the peasants in later phase of feudalism in Europe was then largely confined to the countryside itself; peasants fled from one rural area to another in search of land with more favourable conditions. When the West European peasantry burst into rebellions of continental dimensions in the fourteenth century, one of their chief demands everywhere was the right to free mobility, and the cities by and large looked on passively when they were not helping the feudal lord in suppressing the uprisings. Italian towns did however give freedom to the peasants; but this freedom was 'neither general, nor always very lasting' in the words of historian Guy Fourquin. The cities also proved to be much more oppressive than the lords, using every means to lower the peasants' standards of living while at the same time granting them juridical freedom, observes another historian, L. Genicot.

15.5 TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL SCENARIO

While we are still involved with discussing the role of trade and the town in the dissolution of feudalism, we might take note of another perspective on the theme developed quietly, though emphatically, by a very distinguished French historian, Georges Duby, who bore no affinity with Marxism or with Pirenne. He took the debate away from the contours set by Henri Pirenne, Maurice Dobb and others. It is significant that Duby never participated in these discussions himself; yet his own work, published in two books of great importance, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West* and *Early Growth of European Economy*, decisively altered the paradigm. Duby concentrated on the internal development in the sphere of land and labour through the medieval centuries in Western Europe and brought forth a picture of enormous dynamism. He did not seek out this dynamism in dramatic upheavals, but in the slow alterations in the labour process in the field in daily toil. This slow alteration, accumulated over centuries, completely transformed the rural scenario. One of the major driving forces of this change was the process of differentiation within the peasantry at the lower end of society as well as within the class of lords at the upper end. Let us look at this process in a little detail.

The estates of the lords in the countryside were huge establishments comprising on an average 4000 acres, often running into 10,000 acres and more. The management of the cultivation, storage and disposal of the produce of these estates was left by the lords in the hands of bailiffs, provosts etc. who were themselves peasants of a slightly higher rank, for social values deterred the lords from engaging in these activities themselves. Gradually these bailiffs and provosts accumulated resources of their own through the operation of the lords' estates, for not all the grain collected from the demesne would go into the lord's hall and not all the money collected from the sale of these grains would be honestly passed on to the lord's treasury. By and by the bailiffs themselves started taking parts of the estate 'on farm' from the lord for a year, two years and longer. 'On farm' or 'farming' here meant taking the responsibility for the cultivation of land on oneself by contracting to pay a fixed amount of either grain or money to the lord. The profit or loss from this contract would accrue to the bailiff, now the contractor or 'farmer'. The lord's right to collect tolls and taxes from his estate could similarly be taken 'on farm'.

IGNOU THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

On these 'farms', the bailiffs would employ wage labour, because they were not entitled to unpaid labour services of the serfs as the lords were, and they would cultivate the land with the sole purpose of selling the produce in the market for profit. Thus profit motive and wage labour – characteristics of capitalist economy whether in agriculture or industry – began to make inroads into the feudal economic system. This was the emerging class of capitalist farmers or kulaks, the much maligned nouveau riche, short on the finesse of feudal culture and long on showing off its newly acquired wealth, the butt of social ridicule, yet increasingly beginning to dominate the sphere of the economy. This happened over very long periods of time, extending over a couple of centuries.

Two other segments of feudal society also helped in the process: the allods and the lower orders of the class of lords. The allods, whom we have encountered in Unit 20, by cultivating their own lands with their own family labour and often selling the produce in the market, were a divergent element within the feudal economy. With the market both in the rural and urban areas increasingly determining the patterns of production in the countryside, the allods were quick to attune production on their fields to crops that yielded the highest profits. This too turned them, especially the higher echelons among them into proto-capitalist producers, contrary to the feudal ethos.

So far we have spoken of the class of lords as if it were a homogenous group. Such however was not the case, for this class too was highly stratified, like the peasantry. While the higher levels were entitled to several rights of extraction of free services and goods from the peasants, the lower ones were not so endowed. They had the rights to their lands but not to the multifarious services. With labour becoming migrant and its wages rising, the smaller lords too were driven by resource crunch and were compelled by the developments to take to cultivation for the market by employing hired labour.

In this all encompassing flux, one could expect several movements up and down. 'Commutation' of labour services that the serfs owed to the lords, i.e. purchase of freedom in return for lump sum payment to the lord, went some distance in helping some peasants too, now free to move to greener pastures or to rise above their station through sheer hard work, a few sagacious decisions and a little bit of luck. Other peasants, given their very small surviving power, were rendered resourceless by any one stroke of bad luck – a crop failure or the death of the draught animal or any other. Of course these small peasants still had their labour to sell in the expanding labour market. In the class of lords too, not everyone made good in the market, to which they had to adjust as to a new, unfamiliar situation.

This then was the general scenario of great dynamism, accumulated over slow developments stretched out in time in which everyone – or most — were progressing, but some rising higher and faster than others. Sharp social differentiation was the net result and no class, old or new, was immune to its effects. This is also the scenario where new forms of economy and new classes were emerging which were to strike at the very foundations of feudalism. The decline of feudalism came not through an external push of trade or pull of cities, but through a process internal to the feudal economy. The decline was the result not of the static nature of feudalism but the very opposite, i.e. its own internal dynamism. The growth of trade and town is not an autonomous variable, but is integral to this dynamism.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

It was thus that Georges Duby quietly but decisively effected a paradigm shift in the discussion of this problem. There was also another shift that was effected in the way history is studied. Until about the 1950s or 60s, constituting binary opposites was the chief method of studying history and indeed social sciences in general. It was studied through the prism of lord vs peasant, capitalist vs worker, and slightly later women vs men etc. In the case of both Pirenne and Dobb, the binary categories were trade vs feudalism, or town vs country. In the binary oppositions, change occurred as a dramatic consequence of a head on collision between the two, in the form of rebellions or clashes. The collapse of a system too was a dramatic event rather than a long drawn process.

If, however, one moves one's attention from the dramatic events to everyday forms of life, change acquires a different meaning altogether as in the historiography of Georges Duby and several others. Change in this perspective does not occur merely in a dramatic event like a rebellion or a revolution, a battle or an assassination; nor does it follow merely a catastrophic collision between two adversarial classes. It occurs too in everyday life, in everyday contacts between any two persons and it occurs at every level. Social differentiation was one such process which could not be compressed into any one day or a year or even a couple of decades; yet it decisively altered life in medieval Western Europe. It was this slow, almost imperceptible process of change that Duby sought to capture in his historiography.

15.6 OTHER VIEWS ON DECLINE

Somewhere along the line during the 1960s and 70s, a neo-Malthusian explanation of the decline of feudalism too was advanced. Malthus had propounded the notion in the nineteenth century that natural resources like land, forests, water etc. etc. could sustain a certain quantum of population. Whenever in history the total human population had exceeded this sustainable level, famines, pestilences, wars etc. have occurred that would bring the population figures down again to levels that corresponded to the resources. Some historians, like Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, argued that the growing population in medieval Europe had similarly exceeded the sustainability level of agriculture. Therefore, the famines of 1314-15 and the devastating pestilence of 1348-51 that caused the Black Death which wiped out something like a quarter of the European population was such a manifestation of the Malthusian law. This upset the entire equilibrium in medieval Europe and brought about the transition to capitalism.

The Malthusian theory has always been subject to great controversy; understandably therefore the explanation of the collapse of feudalism on this score found sharp critics. The basic flaw in the Malthusian theory is the assumption that resources are relatively inflexible and can sustain only a given level of population. Its critics assert that resources can always be enhanced through better technology and better management and the same amount of land, for example, can yield much higher output with a better method of cultivation. It is therefore fallacious to assume that population levels in medieval Europe had exceeded what agriculture could sustain. Such an explanation draws one's attention away from social factors arising from the social structure.

A yet another opening up of the debate on transition to Capitalism appeared first in the pages of the British journal, *Past and Present* in the 1970s and early 80s. The new debate was initiated by an American historian, Robert Brenner with an essay titled 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe' in 1976. Brenner essentially reiterated the superiority of the classical Marxist methodology of analyzing history in terms of class struggle. Although he was not directly engaged in discussing the decline of feudalism, but the debate nevertheless overlapped with this theme inasmuch as it was seeking explanation of the different paths followed by Britain and France into the world of capitalism. The formulation of the problem itself has classic Marxist frame of reference. The debate that followed the publication of the article did not remain confined to Marxist historians alone, nor did agreements and disagreements remain bound by one's ideological loyalties. In 1985, the whole set of papers was published under the title, *The Brenner Debate*.

15.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we familiarized you with range of views on the decline of feudalism. Henri Pirenne established the centrality of trade in rise and decline of feudalism. He believed that the revival of trade and urban centres marked the beginning of the decline of feudalism. Maurice Dobb challenged the position of Pirenne and said that trade on its own did not have the force to alter any economic system. He felt that the cause of decline was the internal crisis of feudalism. Dobb did concede that the urban centres were rising but he did not link it with the growth of trade. Dobb saw the collapse of feudalism a result of migration of peasantry to towns to escape feudal oppression which left landlords helpless. A form of class struggle ensued between the lords and serfs and between the lords and urban bourgeoisie. Kochuru Takahashi added another dimension to it and felt that the capitalism did not rise on the ruins of feudalism through the agency of bourgeoisie but state created capitalist economy; he referred to the case of Meiji Japan to make his point.

The improvement in technology increased the productivity with more surplus available giving rise to social stratification of peasantry. Many small peasants lost their lands and became labourers while richer peasants turned into contractors acquiring rights to collect rents. Capital intensive cultivation also crept in with large holdings of lords which were cultivated through hired labour. For Georges Duby this transformation of rural scenario led to the decline of feudalism. Rober Brenner was of the opinion that expansion of trade does not fully explain the decline and reiterated the Marxian theory of class struggle between the lords and the peasants as the cause for decline.

This Unit then does not purport to answer the question whether or not trade and town had contributed to the decline of feudalism in Europe; instead it seeks to trace the ever changing contours of the question and its answers. In the end, the discipline of history does not provide final answers whether from one ideological vantage point or another; its significance lies in restlessness and renewed energetic exploration of ever widening horizons. The debate that we have encapsulated here is an excellent testimony to it.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

15.8 EXERCISES

1) Critically analyze Henri Pirenne’s view on the decline of feudalism.

2) Giving reference to various views discuss the relationship between the rise in urban centres and the decline of feudalism.

3) Maurice Dobb and Georges Duby both emphasise internal developments within feudalism for its decline rather than trade; yet there is substantial differences between them. Can you locate these differences?

ignou THE PEOPLE’S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 16 OCEANIC TRADE

Structure

16.1 Introduction
16.2 Rise of Islam and the Oceanic Trade
16.3 Trade in Medieval Europe
16.4 India's Maritime Trade
16.5 Portuguese Trade in the Indian Ocean
    16.5.1 Portuguese Consolidation in Indian Ocean
    16.5.2 Cartaz and Qafila
    16.5.3 Indian Maritime Trade in the Fifteenth Century
    16.5.4 Affect of Portuguese Trade on Indian Overseas Trade
16.6 European Companies and Indian Ocean Trade
    16.6.1 Commodities Exported from India
    16.5.5 Imports into India
16.7 Overseas Trade of Indian Merchants
16.8 Summary
16.9 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, an attempt has been made to give you a brief account of the Oceanic Trade in the medieval world. Our discussion includes the period from around the seventh century to the mid-eighteenth century, coinciding with the advent of Islam in Arabia to the British conquest of Bengal. To begin with, the most important development in the trading world was the rise of Islam towards the beginning of the seventh century. The discussion ends around 1757 when a momentous development occurred – the British conquest of Bengal which completely changed the main trends of the oceanic trade which prevailed earlier. First we will make an analysis of the impact of the rise of Islam and its impact on oceanic trade not only in the Indian Ocean but also in the Mediterranean. During this period the Muslims dominated the oceanic trade which continued for more than three centuries. We will trace the trade of medieval Europe in the next section, with an emphasis on the role of the Mediterranean in this trade. Here we will also focus on the commodities involved in the export and import trade of medieval Europe. India's maritime trade in the early medieval period, when the emphasis was more on the trade in the eastern archipelago rather than towards the west, has also been analyzed.

Advent of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean has been examined in a separate section. It shows that the Portuguese, though able to make minor changes in the Indian Ocean trade, ultimately failed to bring about any radical alteration in the structure, direction and organization of trade in this region. It appears that the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean, though spectacular and significant, had no dominating influence in the region. The coming of the European Companies, especially the Dutch and the English in the trading world of the Indian Ocean was an important event. The role played by them in India's overseas trade is also touched upon. It would be evident that these Companies were involved in the export trade of three commodities mainly – textiles, raw silk and saltpetre – for which there was great demand in Europe. Since Bengal was the main producer of these commodities, naturally it became the main centre of Asiatic trade of these two major Companies. One important point to be kept in view is that the Europeans had to bring in bullion/silver and cash to pay for their exports as the balance of trade was heavily in favour of India/Bengal. The last section deals with the overseas trade of the Indian merchants, which passed through some directional changes in the course of period discussed here. To begin with, the Indian merchants dominated the trade in the eastern archipelago but later were forced to abandon it and concentrate on the westerly trade. But here they had to face the challenge from the English Company and its servants from around the early eighteenth century. This along with the decline of the Mughal, Persian and Ottoman empires, followed by the decline of the great Mughal port of Surat in the early eighteenth century, sounded the death-knell of the overseas trade of the Indian merchants. In particular this affected the maritime traders of Gujarat, who were the most dominant and active participants in oceanic trade from the sixteenth to the mid eighteenth centuries.

16.2 RISE OF ISLAM AND THE OCEANIC TRADE

In the medieval world, the rise of Islam was one of the most important developments that had a great impact on oceanic trade. For many centuries, Arab and Muslim merchants played an important role in the development of the vast commercial network. In fact, well before the arrival of the Europeans, the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean between east Africa and the China Sea constituted a zone of intense commercial exchanges, mainly controlled by Muslim seamen and merchants. From the middle of the 7th century to the end of the 15th, the general direction and structure of the Indian Ocean trade are remarkably clear. There was a long line of transcontinental traffic, going all the way from south China to the eastern Mediterranean. The second typology of Indian Ocean trade incorporated shorter voyages and distances.

It seems that up to the beginning of the 10th century or even later, Arab ships and merchants had sailed all the way to China and back, calling at the intermediate ports. As a matter of fact, the commercial expansion of Muslim merchants and traders across the Indian Ocean to south Asia and China is historically recorded from as early as the 8th century. Again, Arab achievements made it possible to unite the two arteries of long-distance trade known in antiquity between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. The twin channels of the transcontinental trade of Asia constituted of the seaborne traffic through the Red Sea and the combined sea, river, and overland journey across the Persian Gulf, Iraq and the Syrian Desert. Both these were brought under the political control of single authorities, at first that of the Umayyad Caliphs and later that of the Abbasids. Even the Mediterranean, divided as it was between a Christian north and a Muslim south, eventually recovered much of its economic unity through the activity of merchants and traders.

The medieval trade of Asia was founded on four great products of eastern civilization – silk, porcelain, sandalwood and black pepper which were exchanged for incense, thoroughbred horses, ivory, cotton textiles, and metal goods. So far as the trade with China is concerned, the Persian Gulf ships were already sailing to Canton in the late 7th and early 8th centuries to buy, among other things, the silk textiles of China. The lands of the Arabs were regarded in China as the greatest store of precious and varied goods. Java and Sumatra came next. The two areas formed the ancient crossroads of intercontinental trade. As a source of gem stones, pearls, incense, perfume, sandalwood and spices, the three regions – southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf and southeast Asia – remained for more than a millenium the cornerstones of pre-modern long-distance exchange in luxury objects.

After the Mongol conquest of China in 1280, the empire's maritime connections seem to have been strengthened rather than weakened. As we know from Marco Polo(1298) and Ibn Battuta(d.1377), the two city ports of Hangchow and Zaiton flourished during the period. Zaiton was crowded with ocean-going ships. For every ship laden with pepper which might be sent for transshipment to Alexandria and the Christian lands, one hundred came to Zaiton. When Ibn Battuta visited the city in A.D. 1343-4, it seemed to him to be the greatest port in the world, its commercial traffic exceeding that of Alexandria, and Quilon and Calicut on the Malabar coast.

However, there occurred important changes in the direction of Indian Ocean trade from the end of the 10th century to the middle of the 15th. The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt shifted the routing of long-distance trade away from Baghdad and Damascus to Aden and Fustat. In India, the Turkish Sultans of Delhi conquered Gujarat in A.D. 1303-4, and its maritime towns were now within the reach of Islamic social and political influence. At about the same time, the trading ports and coastal kingdoms of the Indonesian archipelago began to accept the Islamic faith and the process of conversion continued for the next three centuries. These new developments in the Indian Ocean ran parallel to the developments taking place in the Christian half of the Mediterranean. The expulsion of the Moorish rulers from Spain and the rise of Venice and Genoa to commercial supremacy signified the symbolic beginnings of a re-alignment in the structure of world economy. At the same time, the shifting of the seat of power by the Fatimids to old Cairo, the economic importance of Alexandria as the terminus of transcontinental trade became even greater. Under the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt (1170-1260), followed by the Mamluks (1260-1517), the strong economic position of Cairo was maintained with intensive development of the Red Sea ports.

However, in China, the economic policies of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) produced contradictory effects on maritime trade. The third Ming emperor, Yung –lo (1402-24), tried a new experiment in China's economic relations with the trading nations of the Indian Ocean. It took the form of a hugely ambitious series of seaborne expeditions between 1404 and 1433 but these were finally abandoned in 1433 and the future Ming emperors were determined to close China's sea-coasts to foreign visitors. They placed an embargo on the trade of Chinese merchants to overseas destinations. Ming overseas commerce, however, continued in several forms, especially through smuggling voyages to the Philippines, Tongking and Malacca.

16.3 TRADE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The spread of Islam into the basin of the Mediterranean in the 7th century closed that sea to the Christians of the West but not to all the Christians. The south Italian towns such as Naples and Bari in the east continued to recognise the Emperor at Constantinople, and so also did Venice, which at the head of the Adriatic, never had anything seriously to fear from the Saracen expansion. Venice, already a great maritime power, by 1100, established her hegemony on the whole of the east coast of that sea, which she considered her domain and which remained hers for centuries. In fact, continental Europe witnessed two great commercial movements which appeared on its borders in the early medieval period, the one in the western Mediterranean and the Adriatic, the other in the Baltic and the North Sea. The latter was dominated by the Scandinavians whose maritime exploits were not directed only to the west. While the Danes and the Norwegians threw themselves on the Carolingian Empire, England, Scotland and Ireland, and their neighbours, the Swedes, turned to Russia. Another important development was the end of Mediterranean domination by Muslims after the Crusades. Now the whole of the Mediterranean was reopened to western navigation. The most lasting and essential result of the Crusades was to give the Italian towns, and in a lesser degree, those of Provence and Catalonia, the mastery of the Mediterranean.

The trade of northern Europe was not greatly concerned with oriental and Mediterranean commodities. At various times, between the 6th and the 10th centuries, traders and warriors brought goods from the extreme north of Europe to Byzantium and reimported Byzantine goods into northern Europe. In later centuries, Italian merchants frequently sailed into the harbours of England and Flanders, bringing with them all the infinite variety of Levantine and oriental products. Still more regularly Italian merchants and the men of the North, Germans, Flemings, English and French, mingled in the great international marts of Central and Northern Europe. Different centres rose to prominence through out the medieval period, Champagne during the 12th and 13th centuries, Bruges in the 14th and the early 15th centuries, Genoa, Antwerp in the 15th, century. These merchants from all over Europe exchanged the Italian and Italian-borne products for other goods.

The main currents of trade across northern Europe and between northern Europe and other countries flowed with products of northern hemisphere, cruder, bulkier and altogether more indispensable than the luxuries and the fineries. Even in the South, food-stuffs or raw materials also entered into the trade of the Mediterranean region. What gave the southern trade its peculiar character was not the trade in the bulky essentials, but those luxury trades which were associated with it. By contrast, the trade of northern Europe was almost exclusively devoted to the necessities of life.

Medieval commerce developed in Europe because of the impetus generated by long-distance trade. Spices were the first objects of this trade. They created the wealth of not only Venice but of all the great ports of the western Mediterranean. Syria, to which quantities were brought by caravans coming from Arabia, India and Southeast Asia, was the principal destination of European ships. However, from the beginning of the 13th century, imports into Europe consisted of rice, oranges, apricots, figs, raisins, perfumes, medicaments and dyestuffs. To these was added cotton also. Raw silk was also imported from the end of the 12th century. In return for all these imports, the Italians supplied the ports of the Levant with timber and arms, Venice, for at least a certain time, with slaves. But woollen goods soon became the chief export, at first fustians woven in Italy, then, from the second half of the 12th century, cloths from Flanders and northern France. English shipping, however, did not advance with her wool exports. These were carried chiefly by continental ships and by the 13th century had become almost the monopoly of the Teutonic Hans. Thus, if we consider the articles which fed the international or oceanic trade in the middle ages, it will be apparent that industrial products were fewer by far than agricultural and food commodities – spices, wine, corn, salt, fish and wools. Only cloth, first of the Low countries and later that of Florence, gave rise to a large export trade.

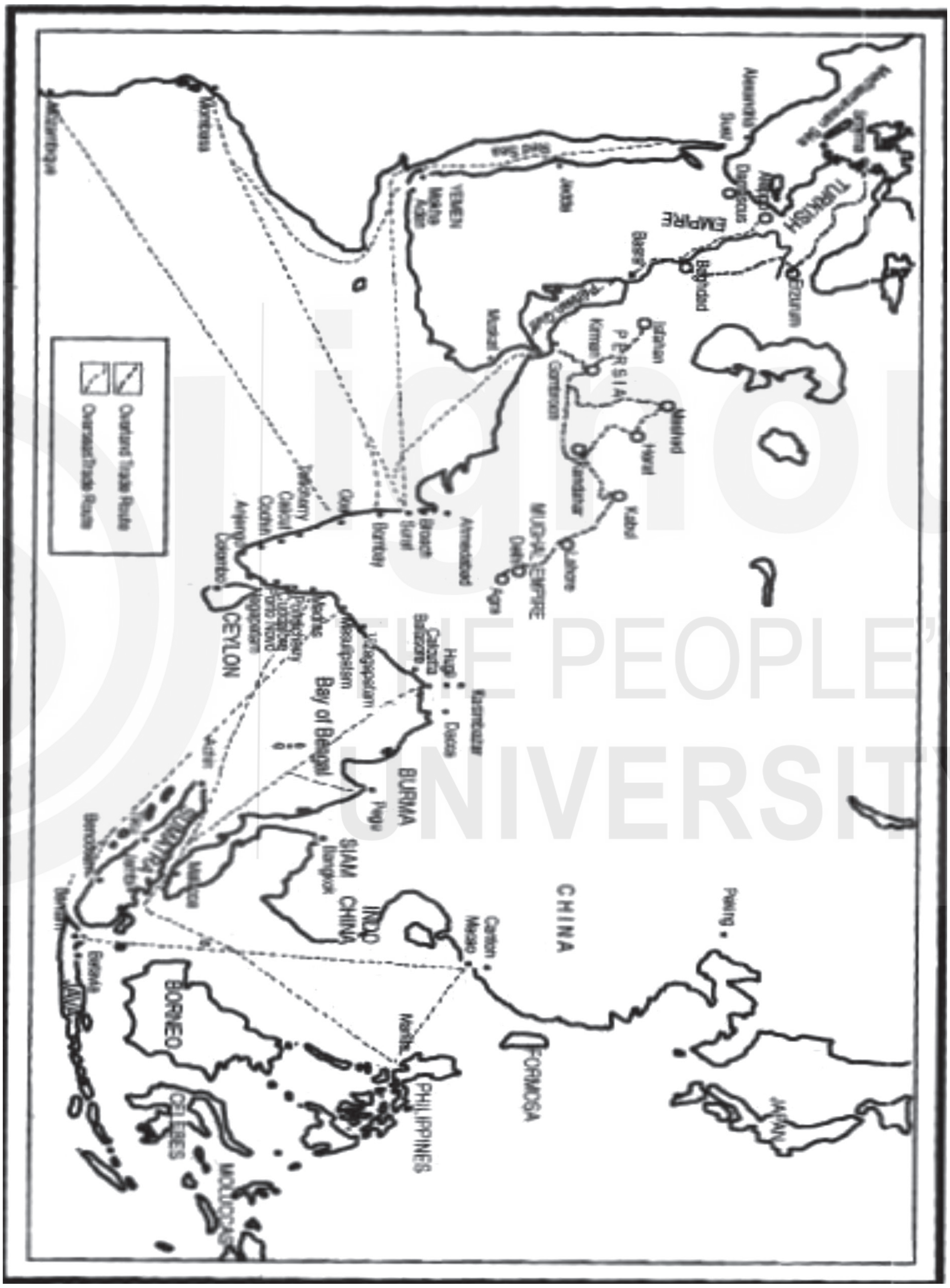
16.4 INDIA'S MARITIME TRADE

So far as India's maritime trade in the medieval period is concerned, it was characterized by both continuity and change. As in earlier times, drugs, spices, the teak-wood of Malabar, precious stones, and a great variety of exotic luxuries passed westwards. What the Indian markets could absorb in exchange for its exports was largely limited to strategic war-animals, spices and medicaments, rarities, toys and exotic textiles. Significant developments occurred in the pattern of trade in early medieval period in the expansion of maritime activity in the eastern waters of the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. The presence of Indian traders following the emergence of great civilized states in Southeast Asia under strong Indian and Buddhist influence in the earlier centuries led to an expansion of the textile trade towards these growing markets. So far as the trade between India and Indonesia is concerned, spices and raw materials of Indonesia were an important part of Indian Ocean trade. The trade of these settlements in Indonesia and Malay Peninsula was largely in the hands of Muslim merchants of the Indian Ocean. It was mainly from Gujarat that Muslims came to settle on the Indonesian littoral. There was a considerable export of cloth from Bengal to the Indonesian markets. There is also evidence to Indian trade with the Horn of Africa and that the communities of the Arab peninsula who were heavily dependent on Indian imports. However, a large portion of the westerly trade was to more distant markets, particularly to Cairo, and to Old and New Hormuz for redistribution to more distant overland markets in Iran, the West, Russia and Central Asia.

16.5 PORTUGUESE TRADE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Apart from the trade in spices, luxuries and novelties, a number of staple commodities were also traded for the very survival of the communities on the Indian Ocean littoral. Of the staple commodities produced in India, teak-wood with its superior virtues for ship-building was exported for ships plying in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. The exports from coastal areas of India of surplus grains – mainly rice – provided a staple food for communities in the Persian Gulf, in south Arabia, and in the Maldive islands as also those in several other parts of the Malay Peninsula. Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal exported cotton cloth and staple food grains. As regards the main imports to India from the westerly direction, it appears that on the south side of the Persian Gulf and along the coast of the Hadramawt, almost every port of consequence seems to have been engaged in exporting horses to India.

The discovery of direct maritime route to Asia round the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese under Vasco da Gama in 1498 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Euro-Asian trade. The general purpose of the Portuguese was two-fold: i) to try and monopolize the supply of spices to Europe, and ii) to control and tax Asian trade by force. Two essential conditions were necessary for the success of the Portuguese plan: first, a clear and absolute naval superiority over Asian shipping and secondly, the establishment of a few key outposts which would act as strategic bases for the naval fleets with men left in charge of trading operations.


Overland Trade Route
Overseas Trade Route
Mozambique
Mombasa
Red Sea
Alexandria
Suez
Damascus
Aleppo
TURKISH
EMPIRE
Basra
Baghdad
Erzurum
Jedda
YEMEN
Mocha
Aden
Muscat
PERSIA
Isfahan
Kirman
Gombroon
Meshed
Herat
Kandahar
Kabul
Lahore
MUGHAL EMPIRE
Delhi
Agra
Ahmadabad
Broach
Surat
Bombay
Goa
Tellicherry
Calicut
Cochin
Anjengo
Colombo
CEYLON
Negapatam
Porto Novo
Cuddalore
Pondicherry
Madras
Masulipatam
Vizagapatam
Balasore
Calcutta
Hugli
Kasimbazar
Dacca
Bay of Bengal
BURMA
Pegu
Achin
SUMATRA
Malacca
Bencoolen
Bantam
Batavia
JAVA
SIAM
Bangkok
INDO CHINA
CHINA
Canton
Macao
Peking
BORNEO
CELEBES
MOLUCCAS
Manila
PHILIPPINES
FORMOSA
JAPAN

16.5.1 Portuguese Consolidation in Indian Ocean

However, it was not until the capture of Goa from the Bijapur Sultan by Albuquerque in 1510 that the foundation of the future Portuguese maritime empire in the Indian Ocean region was truly laid. This was followed by the foundation of Goa as the chief administrative seat of the Portuguese in the East

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

and soon followed by the occupation of Malacca (1511) which was extremely important as an entreport in Southeast Asia and which controlled the sea-routes in the area. In 1515 the important port of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf was conquered and this virtually completed the Portuguese plan of establishing forts in key areas for controlling trade in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese did not stop at that. They erected a number of other forts across the Indian Ocean littoral, several in east Africa, in the Moluccas, and on the Konkan and Malabar coasts in India. And ultimately they finished up with a string of some fifty forts and fortified areas across the Indian Ocean, and a total fleet of hundred ships of various sizes in the area. The principal item sought by the Portuguese Crown in Asia was no doubt spices but overwhelmingly pepper. Indeed, pepper was the raison d'être of the Portuguese-Asian trade in the beginning, accounting for in the first two decades of the 16th century as much as 95 per cent of the total Asian cargo in physical and 85 per cent in value terms. Pepper for the most part came from Malabar in India and spices – cloves and nutmeg – came mainly from the Moluccas and cinnamon form Sri Lanka.

16.5.2 *Cartaz* and *Qafila*

Throughout the 16th century, an important aspect of the Portuguese involvement was the attempt to control and tax the trade carried on by Asian merchants in the Indian Ocean. It was here in their *cartaz*-armada-*qafila* system that the Portuguese produced their greatest impact on Asian trade. The main instrument used for this was the *cartaz* or passport backed by armadas. The near-absence or the inferiority of the naval power of the Asian states greatly helped the policies of the *Estado da India* (lit. State of India; functional on behalf of Portuguese crown). Under the cartaz system, every Asian ship was required to take a *cartaz* from the Portuguese. It authorised the vessel to embark on a specified trip. The ports of call were also specified and generally included a visit to a Portuguese-controlled port to pay duties before proceeding to its destination. If a ship was found without a *cartaz*, it was automatically confiscated and its crew immediately killed or sent to the galleys. Again, if a ship, even with a cartaz, violated the conditions laid down in it, it was liable to confiscation. The fee charged for a *cartaz* was, however, very small.

In the second half of the 16th century, the Portuguese introduced the so-called *qafila* or caravan system in the western coast of India. The main purpose of this was to ensure that the ships carrying *cartazes* were not able to evade calling at the Portuguese-controlled ports and pay customs duties on their goods as also to obviate the risk of attacks by Malabari pirates on these ships. Under this system, the ships operating between the specified points were required to sail in a group escorted by a Portuguese fleet. But many Indian traders were reluctant to join the *qafilas* and call at Goa to pay customs duties there and engage in virtually forced trade. Hence the Portuguese escort fleet had to perform two functions: to guard the merchant ships against pirates and to ensure that none of them slipped to trade outside the Portuguese system.

The principal item exported by the Portuguese to Europe was spices – overwhelmingly pepper, though some other varieties were also exported in the early 16th century. The Portuguese occupation of Malacca (1511) notwithstanding, they procured the bulk of the pepper from the Malabar region (later on from Kanara as well) on the southwest coast of India. Thus India became the main theatre of their trading activities in Asia. It was only in the context of the intra-Asian trade that other parts of Asia, including China and Japan, became quantitatively significant. The Portuguese also attempted at the monopoly of horse trade. Before their arrival, there was an important trade in horses largely in the hands of Arab merchants. These horses were imported from the Persian Gulf region as Arabia and Persia produced best horses.

16.5.3 Indian Maritime Trade in the Fifteenth Century

At this point it is pertinent to consider how did the Portuguese presence affect Indian overseas trade in the 16th century? For such an analysis, it is well to have a glimpse of the Indian maritime trade in the 15th century. Genevieve Bouchon and Denys Lombard have shown that there was a "prodigious" movement in the Indian Ocean during the 15th century before the arrival of the Portuguese. The early years of the 15th century saw, what can be called, the "last flowering" of the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean. In fact, Simon Digby has pointed out the importance of the Chinese factor in the Indian Ocean in the three hundred years before the arrival of the Portuguese, though they withdrew from the western routes in the 1430s. But Malacca continued to be the meeting place of the Chinese, Indian and Malay traders. Again, during the century, the Arabs were probably losing in the west while the withdrawal of the Chinese left an important vacuum in the east. It was mainly the Gujaratis who filled in the vacuum thus created. Indeed, the 15th century witnessed a significant expansion of Gujarati overseas trade. It has been argued quite convincingly by Ashin Das Gupta that the real alteration in the Indian Ocean in the 16th century was brought about not so much by Portuguese presence as by the rise of three continental empires in the western Indian Ocean: the Mughal, the Safavid and the Ottoman. After the first violent overture, the Portuguese settled within this structure and were in a way "swallowed by it".

Thus the picture of Indian overseas trade that emerges at the dawn of the 16th century can be portrayed as follows. Indian shipping, largely in the hands of the Gujarati Muslims, was engaged in trade mainly in the middle Indian Ocean, dominating the sea-routes between Cambay and Malacca. To the west, Indian ships made regular trips to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports but Arab ship owners dominated the carrying trade in the Arabian Sea. Chinese ships excluded all others from the waters between southern China and Malaya while Malay and Javanese vessels were dominant in the Indonesian waters. This loosely knit structure of Indian overseas trade remained almost intact in the next three hundred years.

Trade Routes and Commodities of Trade

When we look at the major trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the important commodities traded at the turn of the 16th century, we find that the longest and glamourous route was from Aden to Malacca via either Gujarat or Malabar where the goods entering the Red Sea included cottons, indigo, spices and drugs. The imports consisted of European woollens, silk and bullion. Most of the cloths and indigo came from Gujarat which took much of the bullion. Some of the pepper came from Malabar through Cochin and cinnamon from Sri Lanka. Malacca received cloths from India and bullion from the Red Sea in return for pepper, mace, nutmeg and cloves from eastern Indonesia, and silk and porcelain from China. Another major sea-route, dominated by the Gujaratis, brought slaves, ebony, ivory and gold from east Africa while cloths, beads and foodstuff were provided in return. Through another route from the Hadramawt and the Persian

Gulf via Hormuz came horses, pearls, Persian silks and carpets. In the Bay of Bengal, Bengal provided cloths and provisions. Coromandel exported cloths and yarns. In the south, Sri Lanka produced precious stones and cinnamon, and to the east, Pegu supplied precious stones and metals in return for cloths. At the end of the 15th century, Indian traders with their large concentration in Malacca, their regular voyages to Sumatra and the strong connection they had with the Javanese port of Grise, maintained a strong presence in southeast Asia.

Of India's exports to the Indian Ocean markets, a few points are worth noting. First, of the textiles which was the major export of India throughout the period, the overwhelming majority was cheap and coarse piece-goods used for everyday wear and exported all over seaborne Asia. Secondly, staple food items like rice, wheat, pulses, oil, and ghee (clarified butter) were important components of India's exports and were in great demand in the Indian Ocean region. Bengal, Orissa and the Kanara coast were the major grain-surplus areas. They not only supplied the deficit pockets along the Indian coasts, like Malabar or on occasions Surat, but their supplies helped feed even cities like Malacca, Hormuz and Aden. It is interesting to note that these evidence actually refute a part of J. C. van Leur's thesis regarding the characterization of the Indian Ocean trade in the early modern era.

Van Leur emphasized that Asian trade was characterized by exchange of luxury goods, small in bulk but high in value. This has been ably repudiated by Meilink- Roelofz, Ashin Das Gupta, M. N. Pearson, Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau, among others. Luxuries were of course exchanged and there is little doubt that India's prime import was bullion, In fact, the crucial importance of west Asian market for Indian import of bullion can hardly be overstated. As for the exports are concerned one should remember that along with the luxury goods, many more mundane goods were also exchanged and actually the latter formed the bulk of the exports from India.

16.5.4 Affect of Portuguese Trade on Indian Overseas Trade

There is little doubt that the Portuguese control of the Indian overseas trade in Gujarat had some effects, resulting in as it did in the reorientation of Gujarat's maritime trade in the 16th century. As we have seen earlier, at the turn of the century Gujarati overseas trade stretched in two main directions: the Red Sea and Malacca. But in the next hundred years, the Red Sea became much more important than Southeast Asia. Thus one of the major changes in the Indian Ocean in the 16th century was the increasing dominance of the Gujaratis in the Red Sea area while their trade in southeast Asia was marked by a slide over the period. And the Portuguese contribution in these shifts can hardly be ignored.

In fact, the Portuguese were not able to bring about radical changes in routes, products or productive techniques at any level. They could do nothing except divert trade in some goods and force the Indian traders to pay extra customs duties. The Portuguese system, at most, manipulated but could not transform. The Portuguese control in most parts of India was much less evident than in Gujarat so that the powerful Chettiyar merchants of Coromandel were hardly affected at all. Even in Malabar where the Portuguese control was both tight and irksome, their control could often be circumvented.

Finally, one has to consider the general impact of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. To W. H. Moreland, the advent of the Portuguese ushered in a new era in the region. The first challenge to the above came from van Leur who emphasized that even in the 16th century, Asian maritime trade continued to be of vital importance. He argued that the Portuguese failed to control even the vital pepper and spice trade. Reiterating van Leur, Niels Steensgaard has shown that there was no dramatic increase in the volume of pepper and spice export by Oceanic route to Europe before the export of these commodities by the Dutch and English East India Companies in the early 17th century. Even C. R. Boxer admits that almost certainly more pepper was being carried by Gujarati ships from Acheh to the Red Sea at the end of the 16th century than was being taken by the Portuguese round the Cape to Lisbon. An estimate by L. F. Thomaz puts the Portuguese export of cloves to Europe over the whole of the 16th century at only one-tenth of the total production in Moluccas. What is of greater significance was that in terms of the total Asian spice trade – not just the small amount which went to the Red Sea and Europe – the role of the Portuguese was even limited. They were "irrelevant", as M. N. Pearson points out, for most of the time for most part of Asia over the huge amount of spice consumed in Asia. Hence, in the final analysis, opinion of Ashin Das Gupta, "there was no Vasco da Gama epoch in Indian maritime history that was inaugurated in 1500", is perhaps most appropriate.

16.6 EUROPEAN COMPANIES AND INDIAN OCEAN TRADE

Indian overseas trade in the 17th and first half of the 18th century underwent a considerable expansion compared to the position in the 16th century. It is to be noted that the importance of the Red Sea trade for the Indian maritime trade remained a significant feature of the Indian Ocean during this period, to be modified thereafter in favour of a renewed emphasis on China trade. India's foreign trade as a whole witnessed a tremendous growth in this period as a result of the tripartite participation of the Dutch, English and the French, besides the role played by the Indian maritime merchants. It was the vast market for spices in Europe and the high profit derived from it by the Portuguese that prompted the establishment of the English East India Company in 1600 and Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) in 1602. The French East India Company came into being later, only in 1664. But it was of importance only between 1725 and 1770. Among other European companies, the Ostend, Swedish and Danish companies began their trade only in the early 18th century and that too on a very modest scale. However, it was really the two giants, the Dutch and the English East India companies who, between themselves, accounted for an overwhelming proportion of this trade through the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries.

16.6.1 Commodities Exported from India

To begin with, both the Dutch and the English concentrated on the procurement of pepper and other spices which, as in the 16th century, continued to account for an overwhelming proportion of the exports from Asia. But unlike and mainly because of the Portuguese, they procured pepper from the Indonesian archipelago rather than from Malabar and Kanara. The result was a marked shift of the European trade from India to Indonesian archipelago and it was only after about three quarters of a century that India again became the main focus of the European trade. As the Companies were mainly interested in procuring pepper and spices from the so-called spice islands in the Indonesian archipelago, they went there to buy these commodities with silver obtained from the "new world". But to their utter surprise, they found that it was not silver but cheap, coarse Indian piece-goods which were in great demand in those islands. Hence they turned their attention to India for procuring these textiles so that they could buy spices in the Indonesian archipelago in exchange for Indian cloth. So the Companies turned mainly to the coast of Coromandel for procurement of cheap and coarse calicoes for exchange in the Indonesian archipelago. When the Coromandel trade became uncertain and expensive because of wars, famines and political instability in the region, the Companies turned their attention to Bengal.

They realized that trade in Bengal had certain advantages because it was not only the largest producer of cheap cotton piece-goods, but also of high quality, inexpensive raw silk and saltpetre for which there was great demand in Europe. So it was on these considerations that both the Dutch and the English established their factories or trading posts in Bengal in the early 1650s, incidentally both in Hughli, the premier port of Bengal in the 17th century. But it was not until the mid-70s that the Bengal trade assumed any significant importance in the Asiatic trade of either Company. It was from about the 1670s that there was a sudden expansion in the European export of Bengal raw silk, which received a further boost in the eighties because of the great demand for the commodity in Europe. However, it was the big boom in the export of Bengal textiles from around the early 1680s that revolutionized the pattern of the Asiatic trade of the European companies. From then onward, Bengal became the most dominant partner of the European trade from Asia which was mostly carried on by the Dutch and the English companies. But after the British victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757, it was a different story altogether. The English company, along with its servants, by virtue of its total control over Bengal polity and economy, became intent on wiping out all other European and Asian rivals from any worthwhile trade in the region.

By the beginning of the 18th century, Bengal supplied about 40 per cent of the average annual value of Asian commodities the Dutch company sent to Holland. And more than 50 per cent of the total value in textiles the Dutch exported from Asia was in the form of Bengal textiles. Thus in the early 18th century, Bengal became the most important theatre of the Dutch company not only in India but in the whole of Asia. Similar was the case with the English East India Company. The Bengal trade was often described by the English factors as 'the best flower of the Company's garden' or 'the choicest jewel'. However, the Companies were also active in their trade with other regions such as the Coromandel coast, Gujarat and Malabar. In the course of time, a gradual and distinct pattern of trade emerged. The Dutch largely replaced and took over the intra-Asian trade previously carried on by the Portuguese. But the promotion and development of direct Euro-Asian trade were undertaken both by the Dutch and the English companies with a vigour that was conspicuously lacking in the days when the Portuguese were the sole European traders in Asia.

Indeed, the 17th century was marked by a fundamental change in the character of the Euro-Asian trade. While the English were not involved in the intra- Asian trade, for the Dutch this was a very important component of their Asiatic trade for the greater part of the century. Cheap Indian calicoes from the Gujarat and Coromandel in the beginning, and then from Bengal, were essential for procuring pepper and spices from the Indonesian archipelago. Bengal raw silk was the principal item exported to Japan while opium, again from Bengal, figured prominently in the exports to the eastern archipelago.

As Bengal was the main supplier of textiles and silk, the two most important commodities exported to Europe, its share in the export of goods from Asia by the Dutch and the English rose to as much as 40 per cent at the beginning of the 18th century. It seems that in the second half of the 17th and the first two decades of the 18th century, the Dutch were ahead of the English in the export trade to Europe but the latter nearly caught up with the former at the close of the century. It was around the mid-1720s that the English went ahead of the Dutch and this trend continued till the mid-1740s when the Dutch trade picked up again to almost equal the English trade. The French emerged as a formidable rival of the English and the Dutch only from around the1730s, though for about three or four decades only.

So far as the commodity structure of the Indo-European trade is concerned, textiles, raw silk and saltpetre were the principal items exported by the Companies, besides a few minor items. Opium figured prominently in the Dutch export to Batavia. Of the other commodities exported from India, indigo was at first highly priced as a profitable article but was later supplanted by Bengal raw silk and saltpetre. However, textile was the most important item in the export list of all the European companies. The phenomenal increase in the textile export can only be explained satisfactorily by the revolutionary change in the consumer taste in the European society during the 1680s. The 'Indian craze' or 'Indienness' was well reflected in contemporary European, especially English, literature. That fashion rather than cheapness of Indian fabrics worked as the most active factor in the sudden and huge demand for Indian textiles in Europe is revealed in several pamphlets of the time.

16.6.2 Imports into India

As to the imports of the Companies into India, the main characteristic was that precious metals, mainly silver, were being exchanged for manufactures and primary goods exported from India. This "bullion for goods" character was the principal feature of the Indo-European trade in the 17th and first half of the 18th century. Though the Companies imported some other commodities like broad cloth and woollens, and a few minor items like non-precious metals, their volume and value was extremely limited. The amount of treasure imported by the Companies can be gauged from the fact that the proportion of precious metals to the total value of the goods imported into Bengal, works out to be 87.5 per cent. The pattern was not different in the case of the English company. While the average proportion of treasure in the total English imports into the East Indies as a whole came to about 75 per cent, this proportion in Bengal varied between 90 and 94 per cent in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. It does not seem that the position changed to any significant extent till the mid-18th century.

However, the influx of bullion stopped almost completely after the British conquest of Bengal in 1757 when the English company's investments were financed by the resources of Bengal. Most of the other European companies' investments shrank gradually and whatever was left was mostly financed by Company servants' as well as private British individuals' money for which they received bills of exchange in Europe. It should be noted here that the Europeans were not the only importers of bullion and, for that matter, not the largest at that. The Asian merchants whose exports from Bengal were much higher than those of the Europeans too had to bring in silver/cash to pay for their purchases.

16.7 OVERSEAS TRADE OF INDIAN MERCHANTS

So far as the overseas trade of the Indian merchants is concerned, the decline of the Portuguese sea power in the western Indian Ocean at the turn of the 17th century gave an initial fillip to Indian maritime trade. This resulted in an increase in the volume of trade to the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia. The Indian ships could avoid Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and sail direct to Gulf ports such as Basra or Bandar Abbas (Gombroon). Then with the loss of Hormuz by the Portuguese in 1622, the traffic to the Persian Gulf became completely free and the Gujaratis took full advantage of this freedom. The fall of Hormuz also facilitated the entry of the Dutch and the English companies into this trade. Their active involvement in the trade of the region contributed to the growth of commercial enterprise in the western Indian Ocean in the 17th century.

The Indian maritime trade was further rearranged in the 17th century by the emergence of the Dutch and the English companies in the Indian Ocean. The main feature of this rearrangement was the great emphasis on the west Asian trade at the expense of the trade in Southeast Asia which was the main characteristic of the Indian overseas trade in the previous century. Though the withdrawal of the Portuguese liberated trade in the western Indian Ocean, in case of the east, the picture was completely different. The Dutch followed in the footsteps of the Portuguese in imposing monopoly of spice trade but with greater efficiency and ruthlessness The Dutch monopoly was very real and almost effective by the middle of the 17th century. The result was that the Indian merchants felt the pressure keenly and thus the Gujaratis almost deserted the trade with Southeast Asia as was exemplified by the fact that not too many ships were making voyages to Sumatra after 1618. Again, the Dutch conquest of Malacca in 1641 and Macasser in the Celebes in 1669 led to a major dislocation of the Indian maritime trade with the Malay peninsula. But the Indian merchants, especially from the Coromandel, Gujarat and Bengal, tried to circumvent the Dutch attempts to control their trade by shifting their operations to Acheh which became a large market for Indian textiles as also an important procurement centre of pepper and tin because of the extensive trade carried on by the Acheh merchants with the ports of Sumatra and Malay archipelago.

However, from around 1660, the Indian merchants were issued passes liberally for Acheh and Malacca, and they made most of the opportunities at Acheh. But they never gave in to the Dutch demand of staying away from the Malayan ports. Kedah, which was a major provider of tin, though not a producer of the commodity, was frequented by merchants from the Coromandel. In the further north, Indian ships regularly visited Bangeri and Phuket in addition to Tenasserim and Pegu. But the Dutch conquest of Bantam in 1682 and the consequent exclusion of Indian shipping from the port resulted in the loss of the Java trade for the Indian, especially Coromandel, textiles. And in the process, the procurement of Chinese and Japanese goods, particularly copper, at Bantam suffered too. However, a part of this loss was made up by the increase in Indian shipping to such ports as Johor, Lama and Pankor. It appears that from around the close of the 17th century onward, there was a distinct decline in the trade of the Indian merchants with Malay archipelago.

Though the Dutch succeeded in keeping the Indian merchants out of a number of Malayan ports, for the rest of the region, the Indian merchants adjusted to the pressures generated by the Company by shifting their operations to other ports in the area rather than by reducing their trade. The near-abandonment of the trade to the Indonesian archipelago led to the emphasis paid by the Gujaratis on the Red Sea and Persian Gulf trade. Thus it is reasonable to hold that the later 17th century was the 'golden period' of Indian maritime trade as well as the trade in Indian textiles. Though the domination of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf trade by the Gujaratis was unaffected by the activities of the Companies, what was beginning to affect this was, however, the entry of the private English enterprise into this trade in the late 17th and early 18th century.

The English private traders consisted of two groups: the servants of the English East India Company and the so-called free merchants settled in India. Their trade was both to westward and eastward sectors of India's maritime trade. The trade in the westerly direction extended to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf regions, besides the ports in the western coast of India. It is clear from the Dutch shipping lists that the expansion of the English private shipping was most probably at the expense of the Gujarati trade. While the number of ships visiting Bengal from Surat in the early 18th century was about fifty, it dwindled to a trickle by the 1730s. It has been estimated that the total number of Gujarati fleet in the late 17th century was well over a hundred, of which normally two belonged to the Mughals while the great Surat merchant, Mulla Abdul Goffur, alone owned seventeen. It was from around the 1760s that there was a substantive growth in the eastward trade at the expense of the trade to western Indian Ocean which was described as a 'commercial revolution' by Holden Furber.

In fact, even at the turn of the 18th century, a large amount of money and bullion was still being imported into Surat, especially from the Red Sea area. A rough estimate puts the figure at round six million rupees from the Red Sea alone. So it is no wonder that the Mughals regarded Mocha as their "treasure chest". European trade at the time formed at most about one eighth of the total trade of Surat. But the Gujarati trade to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf began to dwindle from around the middle of the second decade of the 18th century. The decline of the Mughal port of Surat and the near-disappearance of the great merchant marine of the Gujaratis based at that port, coming down from 112 ships in 1701 to a mere 20 in 1710, were undoubtedly the most important developments in the trade of the Indian Ocean during the period. The total turnover of Surat came down from Rs. 16 million in the late 17th century to a mere Rs. 5 million around the mid-18th century. To a large extent, the debacle of the Indian shipping may be ascribed to the simultaneous political collapse in India and Persia, which was accompanied by the crippling civil war in Yemen as from the second decade of the 18th century.

Finally, while discussing Indian overseas trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, a pertinent question may be asked: what was the state of the Indian overland trade vis-à-vis the overseas trade, especially the European export trade from India? The qualitative as well as quantitative evidence we have now in our possession will negate the thesis that the Europeans were the major exporters from Bengal and as such they were the major importers of bullion into Bengal. It can be shown that the share of the Asian merchants even in the two most important European export commodities, namely textiles and raw silk, was much higher than that of the Europeans. If that was so, the claim that the Europeans were the major importers of bullion into Bengal hardly stands. As a matter of fact, it was not only the Europeans but even the Asian merchants had to bring in silver/ cash for their purchases in Bengal. So if the Asians were the major exporters of Bengal commodities, naturally it was they, and not the Europeans, who were the major importers of bullion into Bengal. Though the above is mainly concerned with Bengal, it does not seem that the picture would have been different if the whole of India is taken into account.

16.8 SUMMARY

Oceanic Trade in medieval world gave rise to large scale interaction between the Europe and Asia. The trading activities greatly influenced the society, economy and polity in the two regions. After the rise of Islam in Arabian peninsula for almost three hundred years the maritime trade was dominated by Arab seamen and merchants. This trade was mainly responsible in uniting the two arteries of long distance trade between the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean.

From around 11th century onwards the Europeans started to gradually replace Arabs as the dominant maritime traders. The early lead was taken by Italian merchants. Shortly, thereafter the Portuguese managed to emerge as the leaders in the overseas Trade. During this period India emerged as one of the important centres of maritime trade. Here again Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish their hold in the whole of Indian Ocean and India as the main centre for their trading activities in Asia. Indian merchants also played a crucial role and held substantial share in maritime trade from 15th century onwards.

From the beginning of the 17th century there was intense rivalry between the Dutch and British to control the oceanic trade in Asia and Europe. The main commodities which were imported in Europe were spices and in particular pepper in the early phase. From 13th century food items including rice and sundry fruits and raw silk became main items. In 16th and 17th centuries indigo, saltpeter, cotton and silk textiles and sugar dominated the exports to Europe. The Europeans brought mainly woollens, a few luxury items and mainly bullion. As far as India is concerned the balance of trade was in its favour. One significant point to be noted here is that the share of Asian merchants in Indian exports was much higher than the European trading companies.

16.9 EXERCISES

1) Did the rise of Islam affect the oceanic trade till the 10th century?

2) Discuss the pattern of trade in Medieval Europe.

3) Explain the nature of the Portuguese maritime trade.

4) Give a brief account of the India maritime trade in the 15th century.

5) What was the impact of Portuguese on Indian overseas trade?

6) How did the British and Dutch companies influence trading activities in Indian Ocean?

UNIT 17 BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

Structure

17.1 Introduction

17.2 Armenians

  17.2.1 Armenian Trading Network

  17.2.2 Success of Armenians

17.3 Jews

17.4 Karimi Merchants

17.5 Some Other Merchant Groups of Asia and Euope

17.6 Major Business Communities in India

  17.6.1 Banjaras

  17.6.2 Baniyas and Other Merchant Groups

17.7 Summary

17.8 Exercises

17.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, we discussed the Oceanic Trade in the medieval period. Here in this Unit, we propose to discuss some of the major business communities in the medieval world. These trading communities in different parts of the Eurasian continuum were the main vehicles through whom the trade of the medieval period was conducted. The time span is from around the seventh century to the mid-eighteenth century, coinciding with the advent of Islam and the British conquest of Bengal. During this period the trading activities got a big boost with the development in shipping and trade across continents. We notice that apart from individual merchants large trading companies were established to handle growing volumes of commodities and requirement of finances. In spite of these developments the trading world of the medieval period was dominated by numerous business communities, both small and large, in different countries. It is not possible to make a detailed analysis of all of them within a limited space, we intend to take up an in-depth study of the major business communities who were actively engaged in trading in the medieval world. We would also take up some Indian merchant communities, in one separate section, who had a substantial share in the trading activities of the medieval period.

Among the major merchant communities in Eurasian continuum we have discussed the Armenians; the Jews; the Karimis; and the Arabs. Major Business Communities of India have been studied under two broad categories –

1) Banjaras and 2) Baniyas. Within the Baniya communities, the role of the several sub-communities such as Khatries, Komatis, Chettiyars, Moplas, Multanis and Labanas, have also been analysed, though briefly for lack of space. Let us start with the business communities of the Eurasian continuum.

17.2 ARMENIANS

The observation of the Court of Directors of the English East India Company in 1699 about the Armenians that “most certainly they are the most ancient merchants of the world” was perhaps no exaggeration. Indeed, from the earliest times to the end of the pre-modern era, the Armenian merchant communities engaged themselves in international and inter-continental trade in the Eurasian continuum. They ventured out of the homeland (Armenia) to different parts of Asia and Europe, and settled themselves not only in important cities, ports and trade marts but also in remote production centres far away from their own country. And thus they created the infrastructure for an efficient and successful long-distance trade and a commercial network with strong link with their main centre at New Julfa. This “trading diaspora” of the Armenians was a unique feature of the trading world, especially of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

17.2.1 Armenian Trading Network

The emergence of Armenian trading network and diaspora in the seventeenth century was to some extent helped by the historical developments of the preceding century when old Armenia fell a victim to Perso-Ottoman rivalry. In the early seventeenth century, the Persian emperor, Shah Abbas I, forcibly moved the professional Armenian merchants and artisans, and settled them in the new township of New Julfa in the suburb of Isfahan. The emperor’s main objective was to utilise the services and expertise of the Armenian entrepreneurs in transforming his newly founded capital city of Isfahan into a major trade centre. The latter did not disappoint him. As they had the necessary capital and commercial network in Asia and Europe, the Armenians were able to develop “Persia’s foreign trade in raw silk, create new markets and products and expand the scope of trade routes”. And they ceaselessly contributed to Persia’s economic prosperity under the succeeding Shahs until the invasion of Persia by the Afghans in 1722 which dealt a severe blow to the Armenians of New Julfa, and after which many of the prominent Armenian merchants migrated to other countries.

The Armenian networks extended over vast geographical areas stretching from Bengal to Delhi-Agra, and even to Surat or from Surat to the Red Sea and Persian gulf ports. It is more or less well known now that the Armenians played a significant role in the commercial and economic life of India. Though it is not possible to indicate as to when the Armenians established their trading networks in India, it can be reasonably assumed that they began their trading activities in India long before the arrival of the Europeans. They were active in Bengal trade from at least the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, if not earlier. As an important trading group, their presence was a common feature in all the prominent centres of trade and manufacture, cities and ports. But what was most striking about them was that if there was any possibility of profit in trade, they would even go to remote places and deal in any commodity, unlike many other trading groups.

It was obviously the commercial expertise of Armenians in Bengal that prompted the Directors of the English East India Company to enter into an agreement in1688 with Khwaja Phanoos Kalantar in London by which the Armenians were to provide Bengal goods for the Company’s investments in Bengal with their own capital and at their own risk at 30% profit on their cost and charges. It is significant to note that while writing to Bengal about this agreement, the Court of Directors of the English Company in London observed:

"Those people [the Armenians] are a thrifty, close, prudent sort of men that travel all over India and know almost every village in the Mughal's dominions and every sort of goods with such a perfect skill and judgment as exceeds the ancientest of our linen drapers". A few years later, the Company made another agreement with the same Kalantar which laid down that the Armenians would provide specially Patna goods for the Company with their own money and deliver them to the Company either at Hughli or Calcutta for which they were to be allowed 15% upon the prime cost and necessary charges. Here again the Directors of the Company noted that the Armenians "are diligent, frugal and very experienced merchants" and asked their employees in Bengal to try to procure some fine Bengal piece-goods through the Armenians as they would "know how to buy better than you can".

Needless to say, there were many important Armenian merchants and traders in the flourishing Armenian settlement of Saidabad (a suburb of the capital Murshidabad), Hughli, Calcutta, Kasimbazar, Dhaka and Patna with their own localities and churches. They were also to be found in large numbers in Agra, Delhi, Benaras, Surat, Madras, Masulipatnam, and other important cities and ports in India. Among the Armenians in Bengal, however, it was Khwaja Wajid who played the most significant role in the commercial economy and political life of Bengal in the forties and fifties of the eighteenth century. His activities in Bengal will illustrate the role played by the Armenians as a business community in India. What is significant to note here is that the Armenians in Bengal/India were not dissociated from their mainstream in New Julfa. There are several instances that the Armenians in Bengal were in touch with New Julfa and there was regular traffic between Bengal and New Julfa, which only reiterates that cultural and ethnic ties were extremely important in the entrepreneurial networks built by the Armenians. The vast networks of enterprises created by the Armenians in Bengal in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries will be more than evident from a close look at Bengal's silk and textile markets during this period. They were conspicuous even in the remote parts of Bengal wherever there was the possibility of good profit in mercantile activities.

Khwaja Wajid was one of the three merchant princes who collectively dominated the commercial life and hence, to a great extent, the economy of Bengal in the last three decades of the first half of the eighteenth century. An idea of the Armenian diaspora and Wajid's extensive networks can be formed from the fact that he was not only involved in inland trade in saltpetre, salt and opium but was also quite active in maritime trade extending over a vast space from Bengal to Surat, and the Persian Gulf and Red Sea ports. He operated his extensive business empire from Hughli, the then commercial capital of Bengal. Like several other Armenians of Bengal at the time, it is possible that he too had links with New Julfa. Wajid consolidated his position through his political connections and influence at the nawab's court at Murshidabad. Through subtle diplomacy and judicious financial support to Bengal nawab Alivardi Khan, he built up a powerful position at the darbar. He managed to gain the virtual control of the economy of Bihar. It is significant that he was not only the leader of the Armenian merchants but also of the community of merchants in Hughli.

Khwaja Wajid was actively engaged in the inland trade of Bengal both on his own account and as a supplier to the European companies. He had extensive business transactions with the French and the Dutch, and to a lesser extent, also with the English. Extremely devious as he was, he had a passion for extending his commercial hegemony at any cost and was ready to swing his allegiance at the slightest prospect of commercial advantage. The main props of Khwaja Wajid's extensive operations in Bengal's internal trade were the monopoly of saltpetre and salt trade.

It is no wonder that the Armenian merchant prince settled in Hughli with its rich tradition of handling Bengal's maritime trade ventured also in intra-Asian and coastal trade. In the shipping lists of the Dutch records there are many instances of Armenian merchants sending their trading vessels to different parts of India and West Asia with rich Bengal commodities and bringing back bullion and other cargoes from those parts in the first half of the eighteenth century. We find in the lists of the Dutch records that he had at least six ships namely, Salmat Ressan, *Salamat Manzil, Mobarak, Gensamer, Medina Baksh and Mubarak Manzil*. which operated from Hughli to Jeddah, Mocha, Basra, Surat and Masulipatnam.

The Armenian diaspora and their extensive trading network in Bengal will be apparent from the fact that that their presence not only in the various trade marts but also in the numerous production centres, especially of textiles and silk, of Bengal throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is well borne out by documentation in European records of the period. Their prominent role in the silk and textile trade of Bengal is beyond any doubt. Though we are not in a position as yet to make any estimate, in quantitative terms, of the Armenian involvement in Bengal's export trade in silk and textiles, there is no dearth of qualitative evidence indicating a significant role played by them in this particular area. The extraordinary diffusion of silk and textile industry, especially the textile industry, in Bengal was perhaps best matched by the Armenian diaspora and their extensive network which made them one of the most important groups of merchants in Bengal, often competing successfully with even the most powerful local merchant groups.

As the textile industry in Bengal was basically a rural domestic handicraft industry, the natural corollary was its extreme diffusion which suited the Armenians with their extensive networks throughout Bengal. That was why they could become formidable rivals of the local/Indian merchants, not to speak of the European trading companies, in procuring textiles for export markets. In an estimate of the textile export from Dhaka in 1747, the Armenian share, among the Asian merchants, is said to have been as large as 23 per cent. In the silk market too, they along with other Asian merchants (mainly Gujaratis and North Indian merchants from Lahore, Multan, Delhi, Agra, etc.) were the dominant buyers.

17.2.2 Success of Armenians

That the Armenians often acted as a group rather than individual entrepreneurs is because of the pride they took in their identity. That they had one language, one culture and one religion was the most crucial factor, which helped them in developing and extending their networks. Unlike other groups of Indian or foreign merchants, the Armenians had built their own colonies and settlements with their own churches in different parts of India which only underlines the strong ethnic and cultural overtones of the Armenian entrepreneurs and their enterprises.

The crucial question that remains to be answered, however, is what were the reasons for the fabulous success of the Armenian merchants vis-à-vis even the advanced organizational form of the European joint stock companies. It has been suggested recently that the success of the Armenians was primarily due to "organizational form or arrangements" which seems to be quite tenable. Indeed, the widely spread but highly interrelated Armenian enterprises operated under the "ethos of trust" which served as a human capital, accrued to the community as a result of their "collective socio-political experiences over many generations". The structuring of their business enterprises, based as it was on family kinship and trusted fellow-countrymen, gave the Armenian merchants two significant advantages – organizational cost savings and organizational innovations. In all probability, the Armenians succeeded because they were able to create networks of trust, shared information and mutual support based upon the fact that they were a distinctive ethnic and religious minority. There is no doubt that some of the other diaspora people like the Jews had all these characteristics but perhaps the Armenians were ahead of the others in these respects and hence their success was more spectacular than that of the others.

However, the Armenian commercial system, based as it was on close family ties, was not something extraordinary. The well-known Italian merchant families are a European example of the same family system. This was a common trading pattern in the early modern period. The Indians, especially the Marwaris and Gujaratis as also the Parsis in India, had the same system of operations. And all of them were quite successful in their enterprises. In fact, one of the main factors that contributed to the fabulous success of the Armenians was their will to better their situation in exile, which gave them their knowledge of languages and of the custom of others. Their flexibility was an asset. They were capable of assuming multiple identities as and when required for the sake of their commercial prosperity. At the same time the Armenians had a higher level of awareness of the international scene and the expertise to link up local and regional markets to intra-Asian markets.

In fact, the Armenian merchants were highly skilled arbitrage dealers who were forced through historical circumstances to develop very flexible and geographically mobile forms of commerce. An ability to measure the risks of overland trade and a readiness to vary the size of commercial transactions were the special service which the Armenians brought to the trading world of the Middle East, India and even Europe, and this was one of the secrets of their tremendous success. Indeed, the ability of the Armenians to thrive on low profit margin, their readiness to deal in any commodity and move into even remote producing centres when there was the prospect of a profit, their ability to adapt themselves to the language and culture of their trading country without losing their own identity were some of the important factors behind their phenomenal success in inter-regional and international trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

17.3 JEWS

The role played by the Jewish business communities in the field of international trade and finance was almost as important as the one played by the Armenians.

In the early centuries of Islamic history, Jewish communities could be found in almost every city and the Jews participated in trade ventures far beyond the frontiers of the Islamic state. Everywhere from North Africa and Egypt to Persia and Khorasan and in India, as far as Malabar, the Jewish communities had originated in antiquity. In fact, on the eve of the Muslim conquests, the Jews of Iraq or Babylonia, appear to have been particularly numerous and here they were second in number only to the Nestorian Christians. In effect, when Baghdad became the capital of Islam and trade surged in the eighth and ninth centuries, the Jews there took an active part in it. In the ninth century, the Indian trade became the backbone of the international economy. This contributed to a tremendous upsurge of internal commerce and subsequently a shift towards a unified bimetallic currency system which encompassed the eastern and western Caliphate.

At this point, the central and hegemonic position of the Babylonian Jewry gave them a headstart not only in the long-distance trade with India but in the organisation of finance and also state finance generally. In Baghdad and Isfahan, great finance and banking institutions arose with important and pivotal Jewish connections. Indeed, corporate international finance as it has come to be known today with a clear Jewish preponderance appears to date back to the Abbasid Caliphate of the late ninth and early tenth centuries. During this period, Jewish bankers loomed large in the entourage of the rulers, lending money to the government and consolidating the finance of the state, at the same time becoming involved in the fiscal system and in tax farming. Jewish bankers probably gained control of the Abbasid money market during the early tenth century and became instrumental in the development of sophisticated financial techniques such as the use of bills of exchange (*suftaja*) and cheques (*saak*). The same bankers also operated as traders (*tujjar*) or as financiers of other Jewish as well as Muslim traders. We find them supplying funds for African slave trade, equipping caravans to Central Asia and China, and organising maritime expeditions in both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

In Iraq and Persia, the Jews appear to have surpassed the Muslims in importance in the institutions of finance and credit. In Egypt, both the Jews and Christians played roles in the economic and administrative spheres which were out of proportion to their numbers. By the tenth century, Egypt (with North Africa) began to seek an outlet for its increasing strength, and the Fatimids took over an important part of the India trade from their rivals in Iraq. The result was a vast migration of Jews to Cairo. Abbasids began to lose more and more power in the east and in the west from the late tenth century, especially after the Seljuq invasion, and the beginning of the Crusades (1096) and Baghdad declined. This affected trade also and even a larger portion of the India trade was redirected to Egypt. Simultaneously, the volume of transferred goods expanded steadily. In Egypt, the Jews again obtained a disproportionate share in this trade in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it became one of their main pursuits.

The chance discovery of a large number of papers belonging to the Jewish community of North Africa who traded extensively in the eastern Mediterranean in the tenth and eleventh centuries is of great help in reconstructing the trading activities of the community. The geographical dimensions of long-distance trade are clearly visible in the correspondence of these Cairo Genizah merchants.

The members of the community had presence in towns as far apart as Qayrawan in Tunisia, Alexandria and Fustat in Egypt, and Aden at the entrance of the Red

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Sea. This facilitated the sale of goods by friends and associates resident there on behalf of the distant owners. The Genizah documents reveal that these Jewish merchants were held together in a mutual bond of personal friendship, complete trust and financial interest. In a community of such close-knit ties, the sanction against a defaulting member was the loss of his credit and reputation; a man who was not worthy of trust would quickly exhaust his goodwill.

Moreover, the Genizah documents bring to light in vivid detail the actual conditions under which a community of Mediterranean merchants organized their international business life from North Africa to India. The most interesting revelation of these documents is the activity of Jewish traders from Tunisia, Andalusia, and even Sicily in the trans-oceanic trade. A great number of them were closely involved with western India, moving constantly between the Malabar ports, Aden, and Fustat. The extent to which the Fatimid connections with North Africa had encouraged these merchants to engage in very extended commercial transactions is amply clear from the Genizah documents. But it is also true that the shipment of goods from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean West did not take place on the basis of direct connections. The commercial dealings of the Genizah merchants between India and the Maghreb relied on intermediaries.

In fact, Jewish trading stations, linked to Egypt and the Red Sea, can be located in over twenty different places on the west coast of India to the south of Broach, and further in Indonesia. But they were no longer as dominant as in the previous period, and the India trade of the tenth to twelfth centuries was carried out and financed to a far greater degree by Muslims based in the Mediterranean area. Still, Cairo became an increasingly important centre of Jewish mercantile and financial activity. Egypt became the new intermediary between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. In the eleventh century, therefore, merchants from Iraq and Persia were found settling in the Mediterranean area but not vice versa. From 1050 onwards, a large number of Jews began to emigrate from Baghdad to Spain. The Mediterranean in the eleventh century was still, despite Italian encroachments, largely in Islamic hands and Arab- speaking Jews participated in the Mediterranean trade as well.

At the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, a considerable proportion of Spanish Jewry converted at least nominally to Christianity. Hence, as nominal Christians, they had much more freedom than before. Meanwhile, the bulk of those Jews who left Spain in 1492 migrated either to the Ottoman seaports or else to Portugal (where they were forcibly baptized in 1497). There were the two most decisively situated locations from which to respond to the new commercial opportunities and take part in the reshaping of the world's trade routes. Thus nearly all the Jews and crypto-Jews in the three key maritime and commercial cross-roads of the early sixteenth-century world who were in a position to participate in long-distance trade they could manage it successfully in a new context of freedom, having been liberated from all the usual restraints besetting medieval European Jewry either by the Turks or else by more or less forced conversion. All these Jews and crypto-Jews were of Iberian background, language and culture, and were frequently linked by close social and family ties. Their background social and family ties helped them to overcome the distances and contrasting conditions they had to negotiate. In the early sixteenth century Portuguese crypto-Jews gained an important share in the burgeoning overseas commerce of Portugal. Spanish-speaking Jews, fanning out from Salonika and Istanbul, rapidly acquired a prominent and in certain respects dominant position in the internal trade of Greece and the Balkans. Again, when Rhodes fell to the Turks in 1523 and Cyprus in 1571, the Ottoman authorities deliberately issued orders for the settlement of Ottoman Jews on those islands as a way of reducing Italian and western Christian influence. No less deliberately, the Sultan forced the ships of the Italian trading republics to leave the Black Sea region and compelled westerners to pay higher tolls and customs than his own subjects in the inland Balkan and Anatolian commercial centres.

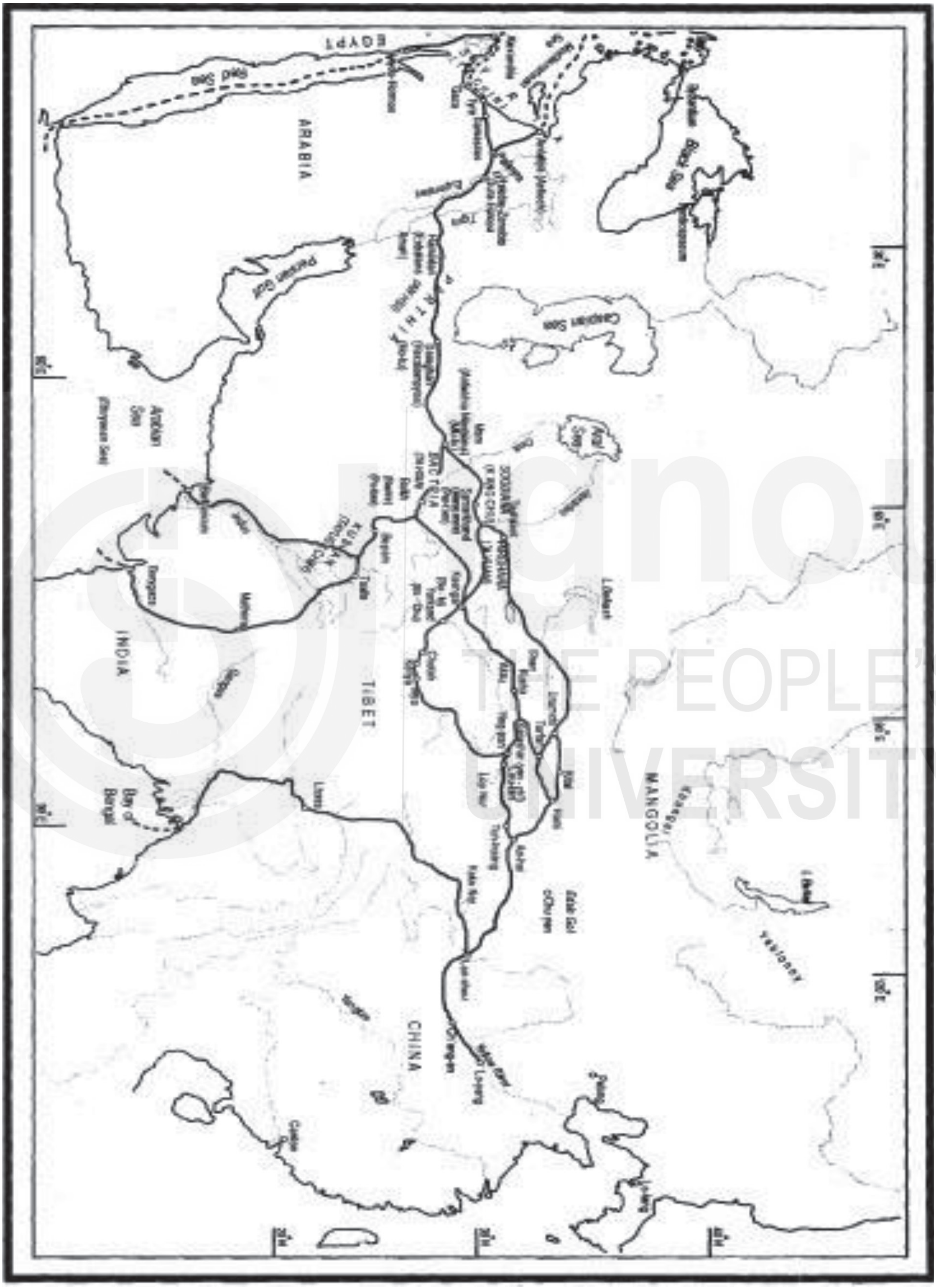
17.4 KARIMI MERCHANTS

If the Cairo Genizah papers richly illuminate the multi-faced life of one community of long-distance traders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they also cast some light on a baffling economic organization known as the "Karim". The Karimi merchants of the Red Sea are mentioned in the Egyptian sources as being actively concerned with the spice trade of the Indian Ocean. However, the word "Karim" also occurs frequently in the Genizah papers in the context of the India trade. It has been argued most convincingly by S. D. Goitein on the basis of materials in those papers that in the twelfth century, the "Karim" was neither a guild of merchants nor a particular branch of international trade but some sort of annual convoy or a sea-borne caravan. Though Goitein provides no explanation for this, we can only speculate as to why there should have been such an organization at this time in the history of Indian Ocean trade. There is no doubt that the total volume of Euro-Asian trade had become very considerable between AD 1000 and 1300. This would have made the ships and cargo of individual merchants trading by sea to India very vulnerable to pirates and political taxation. A convoy system organized by wealthy merchants may have been in a position to buy protection from the political rulers of the Middle East and to organise better protection against attacks by the pirates of the Indian Ocean. There is evidence to suggest that Karim merchants organised their trade from port at Quresia-al-Qadim on the Red Sea Coast of Egypt. This trade was frequent with Yemen, South Arabia and India. They dealt in pepper, spices, wheat, rice, sugar, silk and textiles.

17.5 SOME OTHER MERCHANT GROUPS OF ASIA AND EUROPE

The brisk trading activities of the medieval world brought into prominence a number of merchant groups and communities other than Armenians and Jews.

Sogdian merchants were one of the dominant groups in the trade of early medieval period. They were people of Iranian origin and inhabitants of Central Asia (more precisely the present regions of Uzbekistan and Western Tajakistan). They were highly skilled in crafts, as interpreters, horse breeders and craftsmen. Sogdians were among the first translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. They generally followed Zoroastrian beliefs system. Their presence in China is recorded before the beginning of the Christian era. Their colonies were spread in West parts of Central Asia, China, even Ceylon and other places on the maritime trade route between India and China.


EGYPT
Red Sea
ARABIA
Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Aral Sea
Persian Gulf
Arabian Sea
(Erythraean Sea)
PARTHIA
SOGDIANA
BACTRIA
KUSHAN
Samarkand
Tashkent
Balkh
Begram
Taxila
Mathura
Barygaza
Kashgar
Yarkand
Khotan
Turfan
Hami
Lop Nor
Tun-huang
Lan-chou
Ch'ang-an
Lo-yang
Canton
L. Balkash
L. Baikal
MANGOLIA
TIBET
INDIA
CHINA
Bay of Bengal

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Sogdians completely dominated the Silk Road one of the important trade route spacing around 7000 kilometers which developed from China right across Asia to the eastern Roman Empire to the shore of Mediterranean. The Sogdian language was the most spoken language on the route. The trade on the route declined by the end of 9th century and was abandoned by the 14th century. The Sogdian dominance was most evident from 4th to 9th century A.D. The Silk from China was the most important trading commodity traded by Sogdians. The other items of trade by Sogdians were linen, pepper, silver and musk.

The Chinese merchants got involved in the maritime trade in a big way from 10th century onwards. Their knowledge of geography, astronomy, invention of compass and technology of ship building gave them an edge. However, the government in China exercised a lot of control over overseas trade closely monitoring all imports and exports. Song dynasty (960 – 1279) encouraged trading activities. Their trade relations were with Champa, Khmer empire, port cities of Sumatra and Malay Peninsula. In lat 13th century Marco Polo had all praise for Chinese ships. Ibn Batuta (travels in Asia and Africa 1325 – 1354) describes their ships in details and says, “There is no people in the World wealthier than the Chinese”. It was, however, during the Ming period (1336 – 1644) that the big boost was given to Chinese traders. In 1405 Ming emperors founded marine expedition for business as well as collecting tribute. The ships were loaded with silk and porcelain. They visited ports around Indian Ocean. Here Arab and African merchants exchanged spices, ivory, medicines, wood and pearls. Cheng Ho or Zheng He (1371 – 1433) led the expedition with a fleet of more than 300 ships with around 27800 sailors and soldiers. In all from 1405 to 1433 Cheng Ho made seven such expeditions covering around 50000 kilometers and touched 37 countries through South East Asia, Arabia and Africa. These expeditions helped in forging trading links over a vast region. Such expeditions were in a way an attempt to keep the trade out of private hands. The Chinese government gave freedom to private merchants from China for trading in 16th century only.

The Venetian merchants were also one of the important groups involved in overseas trade. They had their trading ventures from 12th century in Egypt but from 13th century onwards they started penetrating into Muslim territories in a big way. The Ayyubid rulers of Egypt granted them trade privileges in Egypt and Syria. Though there was a break in between because of the prohibition on trade with Egypt by the Church (in the wake of crusades). The Mamluks who replaced Fatimids in the middle of the 13th century granted fresh privileges. In the 14th century the Venetians developed trade with Cyprus, Armenia, Persia and Black sea region. (The second half of 14th century the trade got set back with renewed crusade by the king of Cyprus). The Venetian trade was restricted to the coastal areas from where the Jewish and Muslim traders carried it over land to interior area.

Portuguese merchants as a group dominated the trade in the region of Latin America in the 16th century. They penetrated into areas of domination under Spain and Portugal. They controlled trade in Mexico city, Lima, Santo Domingo, Cartagena (Colombia), Panama, Buenos Aires etc. in the region. Apart from bringing merchandise they established shops also in the markets.

The main items carried by them to these regions were Sugar, rice, fabrics, black slaves and gold. They returned mainly with silver.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

17.6 MAJOR BUSINESS COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

In medieval India the trading activities were very well developed and large scale trade was carried both inland and overseas. Highly specialized business communities had emerged. There were different groups of merchants dealing in specific commodities and regions. There were some groups who dealt in trading between hinter lands and towns while some others as big merchants in towns. Still other groups were involved in long distance trade over land or seas. In this section, we will discuss these varied business communities and their organisation. We begin with banjaras the indigenous traders who were always on the move with the commodities they traded in.

17.6.1 Banjaras

The two major business communities in medieval India were the Banjaras (long-distance transporters) and Baniyas (village and town merchants). The Banjaras combined pastoralism and the carrying trade. Their role in Indian agrarian commerce was extremely important. The basis for the trade and, indeed, for the existence of the Banjaras lay in conditions of inland transport. Goods were carried on boats and carts, and by camels and bullocks. A bullock could travel quite fast but it would normally be more expensive than a cart. However, when the pack-oxen travelled slowly, grazing as they went, and were assembled in herds so as to reduce the cost of watching and guiding them, the expenses of transport were so greatly reduced as to make the cheapest form possible. Here was thus the opportunity for groups of cattle breeders who had large herds of oxen. They could travel with their herds over long distances, moving slowly and having their beasts graze directly off the land. They had to move in large groups for safety, and were kept together by strong clan ties and subordination to headmen.

Organization of Banjaras and Their Trading Activities

It is possible to construct a fairly detailed account of the Banjaras from contemporary sources. The Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605-27) noted in his memoirs that that the Banjaras are a “fixed class of people, who possess a thousand oxen, or more or less, varying in numbers. They bring grain from the villages to the town and also accompany the army. With an army, there may be a hundred thousand oxen, or more.” Peter Mundy (1632), an English traveller, calls the moving assemblage of the Banjaras a “Tanda”. He wrote that the Banjaras carried all their household along with them, as also their wives and children, and that a “Tanda” consisted of many families. In such a “Tanda” there might have been 6 or 700 persons including men, women and children. Usually, they travelled 6 or 7 miles a day. Mundy further added that they normally traded on their own account. Their oxen were their own. They were sometimes hired by merchants but most commonly they were merchants themselves, buying grains where it was cheap and carrying it to places where it was dearer. Again, from there they would buy anything such as sugar, salt, butter, etc. that could be profitably sold in other places.

It seems that the Banjaras often depended on credit. It is difficult to estimate the quantities involved in the trade carried on by the Banjaras. Thomas Roe (1615) met on his journey from Surat into Khandesh as many as "10,000 bullocks in one troop laden with corn, and most days, others, but less". Mundy once met a "Tanda" or Banjara of oxen, laden with such grains as wheat, rice, etc. Two days later, he encountered another "Tanda" of oxen, numbering 20,000 and laden with sugar. Tavernier, (1650's) the French traveller, spoke of the "astonishing sight of 10,000 or 12,000 oxen together, for the transport of rice, corn and salt". According to Mundy, each ox in a Banjara convoy carried between 265 and 280 lb. av.; a little larger load is reported by Tavernier. Thus it seems that despite the slow speed, the quantities of the relatively cheaper goods they moved, essentially for the mass market, must have been considerable.

As regards the structure and customs of the Banjara communities, Tavernier tells us that they were "idolatrous" (Hindus), and their "four tribes" were distinguished by the goods they carried, namely, corn, rice, pulses and salt. Their women tattooed their skin from the waist upward. They had priests and had a serpent like idol carried on a staff placed on a special ox. There is no doubt that Tavernier's account, though essentially correct, has many inaccuracies. Not all Banjaras were Hindus. Muslims constituted an important segment of the Banjaras in northern India. Although some Banjara communities were traditionally associated with trade in certain commodities, like the Labanas with salt, the Multanis with grain, and the Mukeris with wood and timber, it is clear that most of them had no inhibitions about carrying anything that yielded a profit. Again, the origins of the Banjaras were perhaps various, they being divided among different endogamous communities (castes) with different traditions, customs, beliefs, and rites. To European observers, the Banjaras often seemed to recall the gypsies. Superstitions of all kinds, including suspected witch killings and sacrifices, reinforced the gypsy image of the class. The similarities stemmed from the conditions in which the Banjaras lived. But unlike the gypsies, there was nothing primitive in the work they did, which was to undertake as both carriers and merchants the transport of food grains and other bulk goods.

At first sight, the operations of the Banjaras might seem to be those of the "peddlers" of Van Leur's definition. No trace of communal possession of cattle has been found among the Banjaras, and Mundy and Tavernier refer to their being owners as individuals. Their joining in large groups led Tapan Raychaudhuri to comment that "here we have an instance of peddling trade organized on a massive scale". But it is doubtful whether just anyone could join a "Tanda" at his own discretion. The headman's authority over the "Tanda" extended to what goods they were to carry and where. Such unified operations would enable the Banjaras' trading to be conducted on more informed lines and with much greater effect than would have been the case if each individual made decisions on the basis of rumour or intelligence available to him. Thus perhaps one may think of the "Tanda" not only as an instrument of security for its members but also as a primitive substitute for a joint-stock company.

17.6.2 Baniyas and Other Merchant Groups

Baniya was used as a generic name for business communities in larger parts of India. They belonged to various casts and sub-casts specific to different regions and with certain amount of mobility. Here we are including all indigenous business communities under Baniyas. However, we will provide specific names and business interests of different groups falling under this category.

Though the Banjaras were quite important for inland trade, they represented only a subordinate sector in the commercial world. Medieval India had a very large mercantile class, the bulk of it composed of castes, or endogamous communities, which had been so marked a feature of Indian society. Among these communities, the sub-castes grouped under the name Baniya were prominent. According to Abul Fazl (1595) , the Baniyas were divided into 84 sub-castes. The claim of one group to its status is generally recognized by other Baniya sub-castes. The recognition transcends religious affiliation to the extent that a large section of the Baniyas in Gujarat and Rajasthan has professed Jainism for centuries.

Spread of Merchants in India

The Baniyas were spread over most of northern India and a large part of the Deccan, where they dominated the commercial world. Only in Punjab proper did the rival caste of Khatris keep them at bay; and they did not penetrate southern India. The Khatris were a vigorous Hindu urban community engaged in trading activity not only in the Punjab but also in Afganisthan, Central Asia, etc.

But the Komatis in Golkunda kingdom seemed to an observer to be "Baniyas transplanted and grown up in this country by another name". There is no doubt that in South India, the Komatis in Andhra Pradesh and the Chettis/Chettiars of the Tamil country were the most important trading communities. They pervaded the whole of their native regions and were also found operating in neighbouring areas. On the Kerala coast there were no important elements among indigenous Hindu castes who were engaged in trade. Moplas who were Muslims of mixed Arab and local descents were important in trading, especially in inland trade. To some extent, the local Syrian Christians also were engaged in trading activities. There was also the localized but highly important community of Cochin Jews.

The sub-castes of the Baniyas were defined by endogamy and restrictions on dining with members of different sub-castes, as seen with some acuteness by Ovington (1696). However, Ovington spoke of 24 sub-castes but the more traditional figure was 84, as given by Abul Fazl. The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* (1761) actually gives us the names of 84 sub-castes of the Maishri and Saravag *baqqals*, that is, the Hindu and Jain Baniyas of Gujatrat. In fact, throughout the country, the Baniya sub-castes were far more numerous than 84, and the major sub- castes are much fewer than 24. It may be probable that there had been considerable movements of the sub-castes over time. The author of the *Mirat* correctly noted that they were "mostly named after places, villages and settlements". The Agarwal, widely spread in different parts of the country, is said to have originated in Agroha in Haryana, and the Oswal, with perhaps even a larger spread, in Osi in Marwar. Some of the Baniya families remembered the original seats of their families. Banarasidas (end of 16th Early 17th century) who was of the Srimal sub-caste, traced his sect (gotra) Biholia to Biholi (near Rohtak), was himself born at Jaunpur and married to a family of Srimals settled at Khariabad (central U. P.)

In the course of time, undoubtedly, certain sub-castes became more prosperous than others. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Multanis (from Multan in Punjab) were the richest merchants and bankers of Delhi. But it cannot be said for certain whether they were Baniyas or Khatris. In the eighteenth century, the name came to stand for Hindu merchants trading in Islamic countries and, presumably thence, for a community of Lohana shroffs (bankers) settled at Bombay. In fact, the Lohanas seem also to have their origin in western Punjab but they moved to the west and south through Sind and later to Kutch, and still later to Saurashtra and Bombay. The emergence of the Marwaris, a major group of Baniya sub-castes tracing their origins to Marawr in Rajasthan, can be traced to early seventeenth century. Of them, the Oswals were widely spread in different parts. Banarasidas not only mentions them in Agra, the then Mughal capital, but also tells us that even in a small city like Fatehpur, west of Allahabad, there was, around 1598, a quarter inhabited by Oswals. Santidas Sahu, the great merchant of Ahmedabad, and jeweller to Emperor Shah Jahan, was an Oswal.

The spread of merchants in different areas shows that a few groups more dominant in some regions. Baniyas, Bohras and Parsees in Gujarat; Hindu and Jain Marwaris in Rajasthan; Khatris in Punjab and North India; Chettis and Komatis on the east coast; Muslim merchants, probably of foreign origin in Gujarat, Deccan and Bengal were a few such important groups.

Organization of Merchants

It is possible that a sense of solidarity among members of a sub-caste may have helped in maintaining its prosperity, whereas another similar group might decline for lack of it. In the original settlement of the Agarwals at Agroha, so the tradition went, if a member of the community failed, each of the other members came forward with a brick and five rupees to enable him to reestablish his shop. The sub-caste identity existed alongside a very real sense of oneness of the entire Baniya caste. There was, first of all, no bar to members of different sub-castes of Baniyas forming close business relations. Thus Kharagsen, a Srimal and a Jain, had partnership with Ramdas, an Agarwal and a "worshipper of Siva" for conducting jewel trade at Jaunpur (1576). Kharagsen's son, Banarasidas had a partnership at Agra with Dharamdas, an Oswal, and later worked as a factor of a sahu of the Mauthia sub-caste. Thus in addition to sub — caste solidarity, there was a larger sense of fraternity among the Baniyas, enabling them to join together in commercial enterprises irrespective of sect or sub-caste. In the same spirit, certain codes had been developed to conduct their collective activities in case of emergencies. This was reflected in the common action by the members of the entire Baniya caste in the form of closure of shops or even departure from a place, when roused by a grievance as happened in Surat in 1716 and 1769.

In several cities, especially in western India, the Baniyas organised themselves into Mahajan for collective action. The Mahajan was rather a shadowy and often ad hoc body of leading men of caste but often represented all the sub-castes. The control the Baniyas exercised over commerce was certainly aided by such actions of solidarity. But the major reason for their success surely lay in the training they received from early childhood in arithmetic, accountancy, and methods of business, sharpened by constant, acute competition with their peers. As Linschoten observed, "the members of this caste are so subtle and so skilful in trade that they could give lessons to the most cunning Jews". Single-minded commitment or the capacity for acquisition was the cornerstone of the Baniya's traditional outlook. In this outlook were married two Calvinistic virtues, namely, thrift and religious spirit. The Baniyas would carefully refrain from display of wealth and not spend lavishly on anything except jewelry for their womenfolk, which was a form of saving. They were equally careful in matters of ritual and prescribed diet.

The world of trade for the Baniya began with the village. The name *baqqal* for him suggests a popular picture of the Baniya as a grain merchant. He was also the local money-lender and advanced loans to peasants at 1.5 to 2 per cent per month. In the towns the Baniyas could be found hawking cloth, cowries or even salt. More characteristic, however, was the Banyia shopkeeper, commonly selling rice and *ghee* to a poor clientele, who often had to ask for credit and expected harsh conditions in return. Shopkeepers are naturally to be distinguished from merchants proper. Among these, first there were the true peddlers. Tapan Raychaudhuri aptly compares the Baniya jewellers Kharagsen and his son Banarasidas to the Armenian Hovannes, Steensgaard's typical peddler of the Asian markets. Above such peddlers were the larger Baniya merchants, respectfully styled sahs. Through advances, they committed artisans as well as peddlers to work in their interest. The system of advances to artisans, binding them to work on orders of the merchant and sell at his price, was an established system.

Among the Baniya merchants, a process of specialization led to two distinct lines of commercial activity, those of brokers (*dalals*) and shroffs (*sarrafs*). K. N. Chaudhuri notes that the institution of conducting business through brokers was unknown in south India, but elsewhere it was all pervasive, and the Baniyas dominated the profession. They had no inhibition against acting as brokers for anyone. According to Pelsaert (Agra, 1626), the Hindus acted as brokers to all the Muslim merchants. The European companies too invariably had to make use of their services.

The shroffs were practically all Hindus, and, in large all part, Baniyas. Evidence has yet to turn up of the existence of a single Muslim shroff. The shroffs were money-changers, dealers in bills of exchange, deposit receivers, and insurers. "In India", says Tavernier, " a village must be very small indeed if it has not a moneychanger called 'cheraf', who acts as banker to make remittances of money and issue letters of exchange." The very specialized profession of shroff led to a separation between them and other Baniya merchants. A classic example of the fact that divergent professional interests could divide the Baniya class vertically was the incident which occurred at Ahmedabad in 1715. There matters came nearly to armed conflict between the merchants led by the *nagarseth* ("town merchant") Kapur Chand Bhansali and the shroffs led by Hari Ram, factor to Madan Gopal, the head of the shroffs (then at Delhi), over the issue of an increase in the deduction called *anth* that was made when cashing bills.

The Baniya usually appears as an individual merchant, broker, or banker, but the family often acted as a firm, with joint investments and profits. Tavernier, speaking of the brokers, gives a lively description of the family firm: "the brokers are commonly, as it were, chiefs of their families, for whom they hold all the joint property in trust to turn it to account. For that reason those qualified by years and experience are selected [the chief]." Descriptions of individual firms are unfortunately hard to come by. A second form of organization was the pure partnership firm, where kinship was not involved. For example (as we have already seen), the Srimal jewellers, Kharagsen and his son Banarasidas, formed partnerships with men of other Baniya sub-castes who were unrelated to them. But we have no evidence that the Baniyas developed institutions similar to the joint-stock firms of the Europeans.

But absence of joint-stock companies did not prevent the growth of large Baniya firms, whether of the individual, family, or partnership type. In such a firm the sahu, or principal had a number of factors (*bapari* or vapari). The merchant's house, including the warehouse, was called *kothi*. The merchants had factors placed at great distances inland. Pelsaert tells us that "some wealthy banians of Agra maintain agents in Golconda to buy diamonds and spices, which their people in Masulipatam send" to Agra. He regretted that the Dutch had no agents at Golconda to warn them of the quantities of goods being sent thence to Agra so that they could be forewarned like the Indian merchants, who received the required intelligence from their agents. Here, then, there is an interesting inversion of the picture presented by Steensgaard of the well-informed European companies and ignorant, rumour-fed Asian peddlers.

Tavernier tells us that letters of exchange on Agra could be given from Surat, Dhaka, Patna, and Benaras, and we may assume that there were many shroffs with factors at Agra and also that at the other places. This is the implication too of bills being drawn on Surat from (besides Agra) Lahore, Ahmedabad, Sironj, Burhanpur, Golconda, Bijapur, and other cities. The shroffs must have had factors at Surat as well as the other places. Similarly, the Baniya merchants of the ports had factors overseas. Baniya merchants of Surat maintained factors at Gombroon in the Persian Gulf. In the Red Sea, the Baniya factors were probably more numerous.

The conduct of trade in India was greatly assisted by the system of brokers' services, mainly supplied, by the Baniyas. The brokers performed all kinds of services for the merchants, from arranging the sale and purchase of goods to securing finance. Thevenot (1666), appreciating services of the brokers, noted that they were "so expert in their business, that hardly anybody can be without them", and that they "reject no service, whether honourable or base, and are always ready to satisfy those who employ them". Still more interesting techniques adopted by the Baniyas were in the financial field, where the shroffs operated. The shroffs accepted deposits of money and there thus developed what can be called deposit banking. Sujan Rai (1695), the author of *Khulasatu't Tawarikh*, cited this practice as an instance of "the honesty of the people of this country", because "even when a stranger and unfamiliar person deposits hundreds of thousands in cash, for safekeeping, with the *sarrafs*, those righteous ones repay it on demand without any evasion or delay".

The quotations of a commercial rate of interest, or the rate (per month) the shroffs and merchants charged other merchants (seemingly without any barrier of caste and community), signify a fair development of commercial finance

One major instrument of extending short-term credit, combined with a transfer of funds, was the bill of exchange, called the *hundi* or *hunwi*. Sujan Rai tells us that the bill was fully saleable. The Indian practice was different from the European in that in India those who had discounted a *hundi* and the sold it became liable if the drawee failed to honour it.

17.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you studied about major communities in medieval period who dominated the trading and business activities. We covered the social organization, business expertise and trading organizations of these business communities.

All the business communities and their diasporas whether the Armenians, Jews, Indians, Greeks, Arabs and the Chinese in the medieval world shared certain key features which explain why they succeeded in such remarkable ways in establishing enduring commercial networks over vast areas in the Eurasian continuum. A high degree of confidence, great trust among the members of the same community and the reduction in transaction costs through a scattered but well-knit international community which possessed a distinctive culture, religious tradition and communal institutions particular to itself was largely shared alike by all these business communities. At the same time there were certain dissimilarities in the trading networks of the various business communities. For example, while the Jewish people concentrated more on the maritime activities, the Armenians were involved mostly in overland trade.

Indeed, the ability of the Armenians and Jews as also the Indians to thrive on low profit margin, their readiness to deal in any commodity and move into even remote producing centres when there was the prospect of a profit, their ability to adapt themselves to the language and culture of their trading country without losing their own identity were some of the important factors behind their phenomenal success in inter-regional and international trade in the medieval period.

The discussion ends around mid-eighteenth century when several important developments took place which changed the pattern of trade as also the role of the traditional business communities. Of these, the decline of three great Muslim empires – the Mughal, Persian and Ottoman – in the early eighteenth century was a great setback to the Jewish and Armenian business communities in the whole of the Eurasian continuum. The invasion of Persia by the Afghans in 1722 dealt a severe blow to the Armenians of New Julfa and after which many of the prominent Armenian merchants migrated to other countries. The Jewish business community too suffered greatly because of the disintegration of the empires.

In India, though the Banjaras were quite important for inland trade, they represented only a subordinate sector in the commercial world. Medieval India had a very large mercantile class, the bulk of it composed of castes, or endogamous communities, which had been so marked a feature of Indian society. Among these communities, the sub-castes grouped under the name Baniya were prominent. It is possible that a sense of solidarity among members of a sub-caste may have helped in maintaining its prosperity, whereas another similar group might decline for lack of it. The sub-caste identity existed alongside a very real sense of oneness of the entire Baniya caste. There was, first of all, no bar to members of different sub-castes of Baniyas forming close business relations. Thus in addition to sub-caste solidarity, there was a larger sense of fraternity among the Baniyas, enabling them to join together in commercial enterprises irrespective of sect or sub-caste. In the same spirit, certain codes had been developed to conduct their collective activities in case of emergencies.

17.8 EXERCISES

1) Explain the emergence of the trading network of Armenian merchants and the reasons for their success.

2) Discuss the role of the Jews business communities in medieval world?

3) Give an account of the Banjaras as a trading group in India.

4) Discuss in brief various business groups of Baniyas in India.

UNIT 18 COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

Structure

18.1 Introduction

18.2 Pattern of Trade

18.3 Trading Routes

18.4 Centres of Commercial Activity: Markets and Fairs

  18.4.1 Markets

  18.4.2 Fairs

18.5 Commercial Practices

  18.5.1 Credit and Money Lending

  18.5.2 Instruments of Exchange, Money Changing and Banking

  18.5.3 Accounting

18.6 Personnel of Trade

18.7 Summary

18.8 Exercises

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

18.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit provides an overview of commercial transactions during the middle Ages. Here we will acquaint you with the nature of trade in Asia, Africa, Europe and America; emergence of trading nexus through land and sea-routes, markets and fairs; role of merchants in expanding commerce and use of various business practices to facilitate commercial transactions.

The period between 1000 - 1300 was marked by an expansion of commerce in Europe. In the assessment of Carlo M. Cipolla, this period of great expansion saw urbanization, demographic growth, and usage of new technologies and monetization of economy. The Italian merchants rose as intermediaries in developing trade between the East and the West. The rise of Venice during tenth century indicated that it served as border market between the Byzantine East, the Muslim South and Catholic West. The growth of Genoa, Pisa, Piacenza, Siena, Florence and Milan in the coming years was due to the spread of trading network. During the period from 14th to 17th centuries European participation in maritime trade increased. A large number of ports and commercial centres developed in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. Portguese emerged as the main trading nation and started dominating trading activities. Large trading companies were established in England, Holland, France.

18.2 PATTERN OF TRADE

We have already discussed the commodities of trade in Unit 17 here, we again provide a brief account mainly on European trade. The trading transactions were in staple commodities, luxurious items, precious metals, horses, weapons and slaves. However, nature and volume of local and inter-regional trade was not identical everywhere. India was renowned for exporting spices and cotton clothes. Africa and America were coveted for gold, silver and slaves. Arab traders were active in selling horses, Persian silk and Mediterranean products like clothes, wine and grain in Asia and Eastern Africa. They also captured slaves who were sold in Mediterranean countries.

During the Ninth Century, the Byzantine Empire had trading links with the Slavic countries and it gradually opened up the markets of Russia. Byzantium was the Center of manufacturing luxury goods and was known for its trade in the products of Constantinople like perfumes and silk ware.

During this period, the interregional commercial activity was located on the fringe of Western Europe. The earliest intermediaries in the trade of North-Western Europe were the Frisians. Their trade flowed along the Rhine. Various commodities were traded by them. They carried clothe and fish up the river to pay for the grain and wine bought by them. During Ninth and tenth centuries, Scandinavians crossed the central Russian watershed regularly on their way from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from there to Byzantium. These traders were instrumental in exporting honey, furs and slaves to the Near East. They imported spices, wine, textile and metal works. Thus, oriental luxuries like, textiles, oil and spices were available to the west and latter exported timber, iron and slaves to the west.

In the tenth century Italian merchants played an important role in trade. From the East, the Italians imported silks, velvets, damasks (a sort of woven silk), Russian furs, eastern spices and dyestuffs. These were sold all over western and central Europe. In return, they shipped timber, arms, woolen goods and slaves in the East. In this way, Italian merchants were mainly engaged in re- export. They were purchasing goods from the East and without additional processing exported them to the Western Europe. However, over a period of time, various city-states in Italy developed manufacturing units.

The commerce of North Europe was confined to essential commodities like grain, fish and timber. The valley of the Somme and the Seine supplied grain. When Germans colonized lands to the east of the Elbe, at that time, Prussia and Poland emerged as the main granaries of Europe. In the Baltic, fisheries of Skania, off the South Coast of Sweden supplied fish to Western Europe. The wine trade of Bordeaux was wide spread. Timber was carried from the well-wooded countries around the Baltic to the plains of Flanders and the Netherlands. The towns of Northern Germany acted as intermediaries in the supply of salt. It was obtained from the Bay of Bourgneuf.

The trade in Southern Europe forged trading links between Muslim world and Western merchants. While former purchased Frankish and Scandinavian swords, European timber, iron, tin and copper, latter traded in cloths and spices.

In Eastern Europe, widening of trading network marked ninth and tenth Centuries. The Arab Merchants regularly reached the Slav lands. The Slavonic states of Moravia, Bohemia, Poland and Russia developed trade in slaves, furs, honey and wax. Russia emerged as the principal trading broker and served as the clearinghouse for other Slavonic and Baltic Countries. During twelfth Century, Novgorod became the main center of trade with Baltic. In this trade, beeswax, fur and silver occupied an important place.

During this period, fabrics of Flanders reached Bohemia and in the next century, Bohemia imported cloth from cologne, Aachen, Mainz and other towns. It had trading links with Poland and Hungary. There was export of mining products and cattle' from Hungary to upper Germany, Italy and Vienna. During the Thirteenth Century, metal and luxury goods were exported to Bruges from Poland.

The region of Low Countries was also an important area of trade. While the Flanders was the first to develop cloth manufacture, they faced stiff competition from Brabant in the thirteenth century. It resulted in the manufacturing of middle quality cloth by the Flanders. There was import of wool from England and Spain to meet the growing demand of the Mediterranean region.

During fourteenth century, the main currents of commerce were from East to West along the Mediterranean, North and Baltic Sea.

In the pre contact period, extensive trading networks existed in Americas. In the Lawrency valley, hurons played an important role in fur trade. The commerce of Mesoamerica was extensive Tenochtitlan (presently Mexico City) received turquoise and silver from New Mexico. The Aztecs in return traded in various commodities accumulated from different places. They obtained rubber from Vera Cruz, chocolate from Chiapas, jagnar pelts and honey from the Yucatan, gold from Nicaragua, cacao from Honduras or El Salvador and gold from Costa Rica. The Mayan commerce was in luxury goods such as leather work and skins. The advent of colonial rule in this region and Africa during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by Spain and Portugal also changed the very nature of commerce.

During the period under study, the volume of inter regional trade was not very large. The majority of European population was still dependent on local products. The mass movement of Goods in the middle ages was dependent on cheap water transport. In 1273, for instance, England exported 35,000 sacks of wool. Sweden was exporting 10,0000 tons of herrings annually to the Hanse towns. In return 24,000 tons of salt was imported. Wine exports from Bordeaux reached 10,0000 tons annually.

Large scale trade to Europe in spices textiles, indigo, sugar and saltpetre were the highlight of 16th – 17th centuries. Almost all of these commodities were taken from India and other parts of Asia.

18.3 TRADING ROUTES

The flow of goods within regions and to outside areas rested on the extension and use of trading routes. During the middle ages, land and water routes were used. Robert Lopez has highlighted the role of Arab merchants in forging widespread trading links. The trade of central Asia extensively used land routes. The caravan routes linked the Mediterranean world with India, Iran and China. The Muslim traders had trading posts in Sind and Gujarat. In the tenth century, they had an important colony at Saymur, not far from Mumbai.

The travelers on their way to India used the Red sea ports of Jor and Jidda and Ubullah in the Persian Gulf. As the Chinese vessels did not venture as far as Basra, there was emergence of Siraf as an important port of trade. It became the nodal point of trade between Yemen and the Red Sea. The town of Muscat and the Coastal parts of Oman also played an important role in the traffic.

During ninth century, actions of the Chinese authorities resulted in concentration of trade in Malacca. During Late T'ang and Sung period, eastern and Southern coasts of china were used for foreign trade. In the Late T'ang period, bulk of foreign trade flowed through Canton. Under the Southern Sung, Chuan-Chou situated near the great tea and porclein-producing areas in Fukien became the leading port. Korea also had trading links with Japan.

Central Africa had indirect contact with the Indian Ocean before 1100. The 'Age of Discovery' resulted in the forging of more trading links between Africa, Asia, America and Europe. The Mediterranean, Baltic, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea were extensively used for international trade. Contrary to the Pirenne's thesis, several studies have shown that Arab expansion did not affect Mediterranean shipping.

Pierre courou has listed four major routes, which were used by Italian merchants since Eleventh century across the Mediterranean. There were two overland caravan routes connected with trade in silk and Chinese curios. The first route stretched from china to the Black sea, along the steppes of Southern Siberia. The second route passed through the Turkistan desert and connected Iran. From Iran, this land route was linked to the head of the Persian Gulf. Thus the land and sea routes were interconnected. The other two sea-routes mentioned by Pierre chaunu were from the Indian Ocean. One such sea-route from India passed through Malacca and the East Indies. It converged at the Persian Gulf. For reaching the ports of Palestine and Syria, travelers using the above- mentioned sea-route, had to commute through the desert. The sea-route from the red sea to the Gulf of Aqaba or Suez considerably reduced the land journey to Alexandria.

Since the eleventh century, Italian and other merchants trading to the south used several routes across England and France. Many routes linked Brabant to France. A network of routes across Northern France converged on Compiegna and Troyes.

During twelfth century Hellweg bisecting northern Germany from Dortmund in Westphalia was the main link to the Slavonic East but in the coming century four transcontinental routes between Bruges and Baltic were developed. In Southeastern parts of England, it was cheap to use rivers for importing timber from the Baltic and Norway. The use of Dutch rivers and canals, stretching along the east to west resulted in emergence of Holland as a center of entrepot trade. Lubeck and Hamburg acted as the main reloading places for the goods of Bruges. In fact most of the great rivers of the Europe — the Rhine, the Weser, the Elbe in Germany, the Loire, the Rhonx, the Garonne in France Carried heavy long-distance traffic. In England, the Thames, the Stour, the Avon, the Trent along with several other rivers were used for internal trade.

In Eastern Europe Volga route was extensively used. The trade between Russia and Byzantine was carried from the Baltic either via the Gulf of Finland or via the Gulf of Riga and the Dvina. From the latter goods were carried to the Dnieper and the Black Sea.

In the Ninth Century, Frisian Dorstad, the Danish Haithabu and the Swedish Birka were the main center of Baltic trade. The link between the Baltic countries and the northwestern Russia was provided by the waterway, which spread, from the Baltic up to Neva into lake Ladoga and the Volkhov to Novgorod.

The use of above-mentioned sea-routes was dependent on the shipping industry. During the middle Ages, most merchant's ships were carvel built (with planks joined) and were light and fast. By 1277 Genoese Galleys began to sail via Cadiz and Seville to France, Flanders and England. In the Mediterranean, the Naves, the slow sailing ships carried the freight. These were low cost ships in comparison with galleys. They could carry more freight.

In China, several improvements were made. During the T'ang and Sung dynastic rule, stern rudder made their appearance. These were more than sixty meters in length, with flat bottoms and thin kneel. These ships having three to a dozen masts were rigged with square sails. They could carry up to thousand persons. The use of marine compass also facilitated navigation. In Baghdad, pontoon bridges were used. These were linked at both ends by iron chains and were attached at each bank to firmly implanted posts. Thus Canals were put to use for local transport. There was extensive use of camels on the land. The Arabs used galley in carrying goods overseas.

18.4 CENTRES OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY: MARKETS AND FAIRS

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

The Commercial transaction of commodities was carried through specific centres of exchange and trade. These can be traced in some form or the other to prehistoric times. We have references from ancient times from almost all cultures about the existence of periodic markets at local level. Some of these had specific commodities of trade while others had a range of them. (In India these temporary markets called *haat* or *penth* were held in all parts of the country through out history and continue in various forms even at present).

With the development of settled societies regular and fix centres for trading purposes also emerged side by side with periodic markets. The growth of urban centres and large scale transactions spread over large regions brought about a big change in these trading centres or markets. We do not intend to go into the details of the evolution process of these commercial centres. Here we would focus on centres of exchange which in medieval world are classified in two broad categories of markets and fairs.

18.4.1 Markets

The growing commercial activities in the medieval period saw fast growth of markets and towns. Almost all the towns had a market and in case of bigger towns there were more than one market. All the big towns of Europe, London, Paris, Moscow, Barcelona, Venice, Madrid, Lisbon, Bavaria, Cologne, Lyons etc. had big markets often spreading with the growth of towns or in many cases growing markets were expanding the limits of towns. Markets in big towns specalised in certain commodities corn, fish, beef, cloths, livestock (generally on the outskirts) wine, cheese and butter fruits and vegetables and so on. It is estimated by Everitt (Cf. Fernand Braudel, 1982 pp. 42-43) that in 16th and 17th centuries England and Wales had around 800 localities with regular markets. Of these "300 confined themselves to single trade: 133 to the grain trade, 26 to malt; 6 to fruit; 92 to cattle markets; 32 to sheep; 13 to horses; 14 to swine; 30 to fish; 21 to wildfowl and poultry; 12 to butter and cheese; over 30 to wool or yarn; 27 or more to woollen cloth; 11 to leather; 8 to linen; at least 4 to hemp" (Braudel op. cit p. 43). The regular fairs were in addition to these. The situation was not very different in other countries of Europe. It is estimated that during the end of 16th century there were around 3200 towns in India. Almost all of them had markets and bigger ones more than one. Banarsidas a merchant reports around 1600 A.D that each of Jaunpur's fifty two paragons had a bazaar and a mandi. The same was true of almost all regions. Surat , Agra, Lahore, Multan, Patna, Dacca, Delhi, Bijapur, Masulipatnam , Broach, Cambay, Dindigul were centres of international trade. It is reported that Agra was bigger than London during the reign of Akbar. The craftsmen thronged to urban centres to sell their products. The exchange of commodities can be illustrated from the example of Delhi in 14th century. The horses reached here from Khurasan via Multan. The city obtained grain from as far as Amroha (in U.P.), wines from Kol (Aligarh) and Meerut, betel leaf from Dhar in Malwa, ordinary cloth from Awadh (Ayodhya), muslin from Devagiri, striped cloth from Bengal and Brocade from as far as Tabriz in Iran (*The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I, p. 84). The Arab World was dotted with markets in all big towns. Towns like Aden, Jeddah, Istanbul, Hormuz,, Baghdad, Mecca, Basra had markets which attracted traders from far off places. China was no exception having large markets, in almost all towns and attracted traders from Central Asia, Africa and India. The special features of Chinese merchants were that they moved from one market to another with their goods. In Egypt Cairo had more than thirty markets. Even Latin America had their own markets, when the European colonizers arrived there in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. These further grew in size and the commodities they traded in also increased after the arrival of colonizers.

Almost all the medieval trade had network within region and across regions. The village, small town and big cities all had regular flow of commodities. Peddlers, small merchants and big merchants all had their own specialised trading commodities which found their way to specific destinations. Tapan Ray Chaudhuri classifies Indian market in 16th – 17th centuries into four main types 1) the emporia for long distance trade, inland, overland or overseas; 2) small scale bazaars where goods were gathered from places within a short radius primarily for purpose of local consumption and mandi or wholesale markets; 3) periodic fairs where specialized traders met together to sell and replenish their stocks but consumer were not excluded; 4) the truly isolated rural markets where the local surplus produce was exchanged among the producers-cum-consumers (*Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 339-40). Probably more or less similar pattern was in other regions in the medieval world.

18.4.2 Fairs

To begin with fairs were mainly related to religious and ritual festivals and celebrations. With the expansion of trading activities most of them became centres of commercial activities also. These fairs were of varying sizes attracting people of only particular region, across regions and across countries. The frequency of holding fairs was also not uniform. It could be monthly, once in a few months, twice a year or once a year. In some cases it could be even once in a few years. Many of these were held in particular seasons or time of the year. As far as the availability of items of trade are concerned, some fairs were known for specific commodities. The range of commodities in periodic markets and fairs was very wide. These included slaves, cattle of all sorts, grains, arms, craft products to precious or luxury goods.

As volume of trade grew and was connected with international trade, relationship between markets and fairs became more explicit. Initially fairs were connected with religious celebrations but gradually they became center of trade. The Lendit fair held in June at St. Denis in eleventh century was a religious fair. It was the abbey of St. Denis, which obtained sanction from the royalty to hold the fair. Between 1109 and 1112, Louis VI instituted another fair in the plains of St Denis. After 1213, both fairs were merged into a single fair, 'The Lendit of the plain of St Denis'. In the eleventh century, Flanders fairs at Torhout became center of intensive commercial and industrials activity.

It was the fairs of Champange, which became foci of international trade. The information about these fairs is available from 1114 onwards. It was in the thirteenth century that they assumed the classic form. The six fairs were held in four towns of the countries of Champange and Brie. The merchants of France, Italy, England, Germany, Switzerland and Savoy brought clothes, woolen, silk, leather, fur, lines, spices, wax, sugar, grain, wine and horses for sale in the fairs. From 1250 onwards Genoa became the center of trade. The fairs of Troyes, Provins, Lagny and Bar-Sur-Aube also attracted merchants from distant places.

There are claims to the continuity of fairs for centuries. Lendit fair was traced to 9th century, Troyes fairs to Roman times and Lyons fair to 172 A.D. "In Europe Sully-sur-Loire near Orleans, Pontigny in Brittany, Saint-Claira and Beaumont de Laumagne each had eight fairs a year. Lectoure in the generalite of Montauban had nine; Auch eleven ……." (Braudel op. cit p. 82). All big towns in Europe had their fairs which were known for large scale trading activities and great fun for the whole town. Paris, London, Hague, Venice, Leipzig all had their specialised fairs. Antwerp and Bergen-op-zoom had four major fairs in 16th century. Many of the fairs were linked together and formed specific circuits with merchants moving from one to the other. India had its own fairs. Many of these were religious but trading went side by side. The biggest fair (Kumbh) was held once in 6 and 12 years in different religious cities. Mocha an important port attracted ships laden with commodities from India and other parts of Europe. Egypt, Syria and Arabia were famous for their fairs. The pilgrimage to Mecca was one of the big occasion for traders who reached here from far and wide with every conceivable commodity. Hormuz had her season of trade lasting 3 – 4 months and was like a fair. Alexandria had great trading activity for two month (September-October) during favourable season for ships to reach. In East Asia Bantam in Jawa was famous for its brisk trading markets and fair. Like India, China had its fairs associated with religious occasions. Here the state closely governed the markets and trade.

What is amazing about these fairs is sheer range of participation. Big merchants, middlemen, small shop keepers, peddlers and common men they were all there. The transaction of highest order in wholesale trade to individual merchandise took place. Depending on the size and importance of each fair they attracted traders from the distant countries to the regions in the neighbourhood. Antwerp had two major fairs every year. One of them famous for horses brought from Denmark. The faris also had large scale use of credit and money market.

Most of the times merchants came with lots of bills of exchange and they were settled here. The exchange rates were fixed here by big merchants for different currencies. By the 18th century the fairs began to decline in Europe as great centres of commercial activities. Though many of them continued but they were more as tradition and fun and less in commercial importance.

18.5 COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

The growth of trading activities and long distance trade over land and seas made the commercial transactions complex. The trading transitions entailed numerous risks. There was fear of sea-pirates and natural disasters at sea. The required capital was to be generated for purchasing of goods. Money was needed for buying commodities in distant places and sale proceeds were also to be carried back. It was difficult to carry huge amount of gold currency to distant areas. As a result a number of new commercial practices and institutions emerged to take care of the growing trade.

18.5.1 Credit and Money Lending

The system of Credit was widely prevalent in the trading activities. Even at the regional and local levels the wholesalers would give things on credit to retailers and latter in turn to the consumers. In small business the small traders, middlemen and suppliers were always at the brink. If the sum was not paid back it could ruin the creditor. The growth of trade necessitated the funding for large scale commercial transactions. To begin with this funding was provided by big merchants. In due course it emerged as a specialized activity with separate category of money lenders. However, most of big merchants continued to deal in providing money on credit. In case of India the nobles (high officers of the state) also lended money for trading. They dealt in big amounts and gave it to established merchants only. In many parts of Europe also the nobles were involved in providing funding for business.

The practice of granting maritime loan to a ship owner or merchant was existing in Europe for a long time. Such loan was repaid only after the vessel or Cargo had arrived safely at agreed destination. The maritime loan was of great advantage. It offered credit and insurance to the borrower. But the rate of interest on it was very high. In around 1230, this loan was banned by the church. However the practice continued by converting it into an exchange contract.

Pierre Courou has pointed out several devices used by Italian merchants for generating capital. There was use of *Commenda*, a periodic partnership for one season. The evidences available from Venice of eleventh century indicate that *Commenda* was a “partnership” concluded between a financer and a merchant. While the former provided the capital, latter under took journey for conducting trade. There also existed another type of partnership between merchants. It was called *colleganza*. Under this arrangement, one merchant provided only the capital, another merchant, while providing capital was also involved in trade. The massive collection of Genoese notarial documents indicates that the *Commenda* declined in Genoa by the latter half of the thirteenth century. The *Compagnia* or partnership replaced it. Initially such partnership brought together family members having capital but gradually these gave way to *Corpidi: Compagnia* or Capital of the society. These were open to individuals who wished to invest their capital for trading transactions.

The payment of debts was also an integral part of commercial transactions. Often merchants either did not carry cash or were short of resources to purchase commodities. They had to borrow and debts were cleared during the fairs. The available records show that at the fairs, payment was done on the last day. The transactions were recorded. These written writs guaranteed the clearance of debts by merchants who had borrowed money. In this way credit system developed. It was not dependent on the transportation of Coins. Henry Pirenne has rightly observed that the fair acted as an embryonic clearinghouse for the European economy.

Beside currency, several methods were used to facilitate exchange. One such mechanism was the "fair letter", appearing in the Netherlands. It recorded debt in the presence of several municipal magistrates. It was written in the form of a "divide letter, two copies being written on the one sheet of Parchment. It was torn into two and was given to Magistrate and Creditor. The fitting together of these two portions authenticated the deed. Thus the "fair-letter" carried with it the right to exact payment.

A certain interest was charged by the lenders from the debtor. In Europe the Christian Church had prohibited lending money at interest (usury). The church was of the opinion that the only way of making money should be through work and earning profits from money does not have religious sanction. Islam also prohibits charging interest. As a result until 13th century Jews were the main money lenders. A lot of resentment against Jews and their persecution can be ascribed to their money lending business. However, the ban by Church succeeded only partially and many Christian groups (Lombards of Italy was one such group others were Tuscan and Cahor money lenders) still followed money lending and at times camouflaged and circumvented it in various ways (one of the ways was to consider that interest could be charged if lender was running a risk of losing). A distinction was also put forward by articulating that if money is loaned for some personal use charging interest would amount to usury and is sinful while using loan for business to earn more money should not be considered usury and just interest which was legitimate. The instruments of exchange also helped in advancing money with commission built in and escaped the charge of usury.

The rate of interest was around 20% they could settle for upto 10%. In India the interest rates varied from region to region and could be from 9 to 18%. However, the interest rates depended on a number of factors and could be as high as 100%. The factors taken into account were the distance, reliability of the party raising loans, the bargaining capacity of debtor and risks involved in the trading commodity and place.

18.5.2 Instruments of Exchange, Money Changing and Banking

The use of currency was integral to trading activities. Several methods were devised to issue required currency by the state in different parts of the world. During the T'ang and Sung period in China, apart from coins, paper money and paper credit was also used. As early as 811, the T'ang was issuing 'flying cash' to pay for goods acquired in distant areas. These money drafts were reimbursable at the capital. Under the Sung many such drafts were issued. These government money drafts were exchanged between merchants who wished to transfer credits. The private bankers also developed another type of paper money. They used certificates of deposit, which could be cashed for a three per cent service charge. Such certificates were circulated freely at face value. Those issued by the bankers of Chengtu in Szechwan were very famous. In 1204, when the government took them over, they became the world's first genuine paper money. These certificates were valid for a period of three years and entailed services charge of three per cent. In Tokugawa Japan, individual daimyo used rice and silver certificates as paper money within their domains. In India merchants used both currency and paper transactions like *Hundi*.

It is important to stress the basis of using currency as the medium of trading transactions during the middle ages. For an understanding of its use, one has to take into consideration, the unit of account and the medium of exchange. The money used in actual payment was first converted into the standard of value and large transactions were always paid by weight. It had direct bearing on the value of a system of coinage. The trading was conducted in different currencies like florins, guilders, ducats, pounds or any other. The specialist money changes used to assess the value of the coin by determining how much precious metal it contained. It may be noted that people accepting coins evaluated them not at their face value but according to their metal content. In such a situation coined money could not act as the comprehensive means of payment in the middle Ages. The crucial role of money changers contributed to their controlling large sums of money and effecting the transfer of funds and even extended time loans to merchants and bankers.

Because of varying currencies and their value, role of moneychangers became important. The practice of money changing was in vogue in the Western Europe during the ninth century. In the second half of the twelfth century moneychangers were active in Genoa. They were known as bancherii (word was derived from the bench on which money lenders handled coins). These moneychangers exchanged coins and accepted deposits from their clients. They were paid small amount for safe keeping of money. These deposits were used for clearing debts in far away places. By the end of twelfth century the bill of exchange also made its appearance. These bills were written by moneychangers and assured the payment abroad in foreign money to merchants. The payment was equivalent of the sum deposited by these merchants with moneychangers.

With the development of semi-permanent money markets, moneychangers started acting as bankers. They not only deposited money but also extended credit to customers and got involved in overseas trade. They formed partnerships, which made it possible to transfer funds even when debtors and creditors had accounts with different establishments. By the middle of fourteenth century non-negotiable bills and notes were widely used.

The bill of exchange as already indicated was used to get around the church's prohibition of usury. Here the bills were issued at one place which could be exchanged at another in some different currency which might have different value. The rate of exchange between the currency having varying value could conceal the interest charged. In India *hundi* was most important instrument of exchange. Tavernier, a 17th century traveller noted that almost every village had *sarraff*, who were money changers and acted as banker to make remittances of money and letters of exchange. The *hundi* in the form of a paper was issued for loans, money deposit or remittance of money from one place to another and was saleable. It carried the amount, the specified period and the place where it was encashable. The interest and other charges (insurance, transmission or exchange charges etc.) depended on the nature of transaction.

In Europe the bills of exchange themselves became an instrument of trade. They were bought at less than the face value and could be realized on profit of upto 5% for export trade in another town and branch. The quality of instrument of exchange was judged by its accessibility and soundness and it was to be easily negotiable. There was strict code of behaviour in dealing in them. In the Abbasid caliphate the bills of exchange were called *suftaja* and cheque as *saak*.

The institution of Banking on a full scale with resident banking establishments came into existence in around 13th century. Italy took the lead and cities like Genoa, Lucca, Florence, Tuscany, Rome and Venice became the centres of banking activity. A large number of family firms established banks in Florence. By the last decade of 13th century Bardi and Peruzzi families of Florence established Banks in England also. Peruzzi had branches in Avignon , Bruges, Cyprus, London, Naples, Paris, Pisa, Rhodes, Sicily, Tunis and Venice. By one estimate by the year 1338 around 80 banking houses were operating in Florence with exchanges in every part of Europe. By the end of 14th and early 15th century a number of European cities had banks established by business houses. The Medici Bank of Italy was one of the most powerful banks of the 15th century. With its headquarter in Florence it established branches in Rome, Naples, Milan, Pisa, Venice, Geneva, Lyons, Avignon, Bruges, London and many other cities. They even became financial agents of the church, extended credit to kings and facilitated international trade in Europe. Banks participated in trade as well as making loans to traders. In fact in the early phase trading was more important than banking.

Another important institution that emerged in late medieval period was Exchange or Stock Exchange which was central to all trading activity. In 1681 it was described as 'the meeting place of bankers, merchants and businessmen, exchange currency dealers and banker's agents, broker and other persons' (Samuel Ricard cf. Braudel, p.97). By 16th century every major commercial town in Europe had an exchange. According to Braudel "An Exchange was, relatively speaking, like the top section of a fair, but one in permanent session. Because the important businessmen as well as a host of intermediaries met here, business of every sort could be transacted: operations in commodities, currency exchange, share holding, maritime insurance where the risk was spread among several guarantors; and it was also a money market, a finance market and a stock market" (*Wheels of Commerce*, p. 100).

18.5.3 Accounting

The recording of commercial transactions was essential for regulating trade. In maritime trade, practice of venture accounting was in vogue in Europe. It was a wide spread custom to operate a separate account for each shipment. In maritime trade, role of the scribe who maintained records was very crucial. He maintained the ship's inventory. In it, all items abroad were listed and each transaction was recorded separately. Gradually all items pertaining to an individual were listed together. Such a procedure came to provide a running account. The next development evident in Peruzzi Ledgers (1335-43) was to adopt a style in which all debts were written in the first half and credits in the rear half at the ledger. Italians adopted the double-entry book keeping in fifteenth century. In this way, the development of accounting stabilized monetary transitions.

18.6 PERSONNEL OF TRADE

The growth of trade and business transaction gave rise to host of commercial activities and persons associated with it. Merchants were central to all these activities. Apart from buying and selling commodities they also acted as money lenders, financiers, money changers, brokers, bankers, commercial agents etc. Most of the time the big merchants performed many of these functions simultaneously. While a few restricted themselves to their specialized area only. The specialization of this sort emerged gradually toward the later medieval period only.

The transactions at local level were directly in the hands of producers. Thus, Monks, fishermen, peasants and landlords acted as "part time merchants". However as trade grew in volume, it came under the control of enterprising merchants. These merchants regulated and even controlled production processes. They enjoyed political power and formed guilds to maintain their hold over trading activities. They used several methods to augment their resources. Jews, Arabs, Italians, Flanders, English, German and Scandinavians played multiple roles in this expanding trade. They made huge fortunes. Henry Pirenne has outlined details from the biography of Godric who was a trader of East Anglia. He lived at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Initially, he was a beachcomber but gradually rose to become a substantial merchant. He was also member of a partnership. He renounced wealth in the last years of his life.

Two aspects of trading transactions indicated an attempt by merchants to organize them. Firstly, in foreign countries merchants regulated their lives and trade in such a way that they were not to encounter any opposition.

In China, during ninth century, outside merchants lived in designated quarters in the port cities. In India Arab merchants were active. There was greater mobility in Europe and the role of Italian merchants was more significant. During Ninth Century Frisian merchants frequented London in England, Rouen, Amiens in France, Cologne and Maiz in Germany and many towns in Scandnavia and spread their trade. However, during the period Italian merchants had an extensive trading network and obtained trading privileges in many countries. Initially where ever they went, they had small trading settlements. It was the *Fondaco*, large building which accommodated these merchants. It was used as residence, storehouse and transaction center. While the Italian merchants followed the laws of the country where such *Fondaco* existed, but these were administered by their own officers. Venice also provided similar places to German merchants.

With the expansion of trade, number of merchants residing in foreign countries also rose. By the late twelfth century 10,000 Venetians were residing in Constantinople. The Italian merchants came to monopolize the freight and passenger traffic throughout the Mediterranean. They were engaged in several jobs. They were bowmen, sailors, shipwrights, captains of merchant's ships and fleet Admirals, textile manufacturers, mining entrepreneurs, lessees of mints, moneylenders, tax collectors and bankers in the service of the Pope and the kings of England and France. For instance the Florentine Franzesi brothers (Mouche and Biche) were revenue agents of Philip the fair. Under Edward II, Antonio Pessagno, a Genoese handled the royal trade. The Italian merchants collected tithe through out Europe on behalf of the Pope. They also took care of his commercial transactions. Many of these merchants like Federico Corner, Benedetto Zaccario from Genoa and Francesco Datini from Florence made huge profits.

The trading activities were mainly based on the efforts of individuals or family enterprises. However as trade was regulated across countries, large partnerships were set up. Apart from family members, outsiders were also included as shareholders. The growth of permanent business organizations in different parts of Europe meant that merchants could regulate their commercial transactions through agents and partners.

18.7 SUMMARY

A broad survey of commercial practices and activities in the medieval world shows that the commercial transactions were in a wide range of commodities like spices, textiles, silk, sugar, precious metals, minerals, horses, weapons slaves and a host of luxury items. Different European countries had trading links with each other as well as with China, India, Africa, Latin America, East Asia and the Arab World. Trade circuits were formed at regional level and each circuit was linked with other in the movement of commodities. The money economy was very well developed. Large numbers of markets and fairs emerged as centres of exchange and became nerve centres of this trade. These markets and fairs had their own specialized commercial practices and personnel operating in them. Over land and over seas trade followed defined trade routes. The Maritime trade contributed to manifold rise in the volume of trade. Ship building technology and navigation underwent major changes.

The large scale commercial activities gave rise to new commercial practices. Financing and money lending became an integral part of international trade. In view of different countries having gold and silver metallic currencies of various denominations money changing developed as a specialized activity. The instruments of exchange facilitated the large scale trade and dispensed the need of carrying large amounts of cash for trading purposes. Banking as an institution started in Italy and soon it became indispensable for trading operations. Stock exchanges as an institution provided facility of a range of commercial activities under one roof. They brought together various trade professionals at one place.

The merchants of various hues and nationalities could be found settled in regions distant from their place of origin. Need for funding for large scale trade led to the forming of partnership firms and family enterprises and organizations of merchants.

18.8 EXERCISES

1) Give a brief account of the pattern of trade in Europe.

2) How markets and fairs developed as centres with the development of commercial activities?

3) Analyze new commercial practices to carry out trading activities.

4) Write short notes on

   i) Trade Routes and

   ii) Personnel of Trade

UNIT 19 CRAFT PRODUCTION

Structure

19.1 Introduction

19.2 Textile Production

19.3 Pottery, Porcelain and Ceramics

19.4 Glass Making

19.5 Metallurgy and Mining

19.6 Organization of Production and Guilds

19.7 Working Conditions

19.8 Summary

19.9 Exercises

19.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will examine the craft manufacture during the medieval period. Here we will focus on the range of products, the organization of production and working conditions of the craftsmen and artisans associated with production activities.

Various crafts as they developed in different parts of the world in the pre industrial period depended on the availability of raw material, mineral resources, skills of craftsmen and the technological development.

It would not be possible for us to go into the details of individual crafts in every region. We will confine our discussion to mainly such crafts which were spread in large regions. Textiles, pottery, metallurgy and glassworks are some of the crafts which we propose to discuss in this Unit. The expansion of international commercial activities had its impact on the craft production.

Textiles were the main item of export in Asia and Europe. The availability of raw material, dyeing and skill to manufacture bright coloured clothes created huge demand for Indian cotton fabric. The Europe dominated in the area of woollen textiles. The textile industry brought various parts of Europe together. Exchange of raw material and finished products was major linkage between different parts. Gradually it became a source of income for merchants in England and Italy. The ruling classes also benefited from this industry. They could collect more taxes from the trade based on this industry. As a result several privileges were extended to the textile industry. The Silk manufacture in China reached its zenith with large demand in Europe and other parts of world.

The woollen textile manufacture in England and a few other regions of Europe were of high quality as sheep were reared in many parts of Europe. Various dye stuffs were imported for dying purposes. (Indigo from India and Kermes or a red dye from Mediterranean region) China led in the area of Porcelain and pottery making while glassware and metal crafts were preserves of Europe.

The growth in population created more demand for various commodities. It also provided labour, which could be used in various industries. In England, woollen industry was set up in rural areas. The feudal crisis of mid fourteenth century in Europe led to more unemployment. Large scale migration of population from rural areas to urban centres where manufacturing units were located is noticeable. Over the period of time, in Asia, political stability and economic growth induced the growth of various industries. An increase in the use of metal like iron for manufacturing weapons led to expansion of mining. The use of currency and commercial transactions created demand for precious metals.

With the increase in production, organization of production also underwent changes resulting in the change of conditions of those who were associated with the production process.

19.2 TEXTILE PRODUCTION

The textile manufacture is probably one of the oldest craft in almost all societies. Clothing of different types was produced in almost all regions of the world at least for the local consumption. In the medieval period India was one of the largest produces of cotton textiles. More than hundred varieties of different types were produced here. Large quantities were exported to various parts of Asia and Europe. It was known for the variety and durable bright colours. Two methods were used for decorating fabrics. The batik known by Indonesian name was a skill used for protecting the design by wax before dipping the fabric into the dye bath. The second method was known as patola. Under it, yarn was dyed before weaving. Afterwards fabrics were weaved as per the calculations of design. It ensured the emergence of pattern on both sides of the fabric.

In Arab world combing was used for weaving wool. Cotton was carded by means of a sort of bow and weaving was done on a loom. Carpet making was one of the major craft in the Central Asia and Islamic World. For this, loom was always placed vertically. The warp was of undyed wool. The children employed in the making of carpet generally crouched on a plank. It rested on the rungs of two vertical ladders. The plank was raised, as the work progressed. Between each line of wool stitches, wool left thread was passed. The stitch was made on the right side. The wool was passed with the right hand twice round a warp thread tied in a running knot on the warp thread alongside. It was then cut with a small knife, which was held in the palm of same hand. While children worked at great speed, a worker continuously guided them about the design.

The weaving industry also existed in Egypt and Nubia for a long time. The available archaeological evidences show the use of cotton in Senegal flood plain during the tenth century. The narrow woven stripes were used for manufacturing cotton. The cotton weaving was widespread in Ethiopia also. There was use of narrow loom and spindle whorls in the thirteenth century.

In China, spinning and weaving were in the hands of housewives. In the production of silk labour of craftsmen was used. The contact with Iran brought many changes in woven motifs. The T’ang patterns woven on the weft produced Sassanid motifs like pearl entrusting medallions. Under the Sung dynasty brocaded silk woven with gold thread was produced. The Chinese also used the ancient techniques of dry lacquers. A clay model was coated with three to fifteen layers of lacquer. On this crust, designs were made by using paste having lacquer base. Once the lacquer was dried, the clay model was withdrawn. Finally the shell of hemp and lacquer was left. This skill was used in Japan also.

The production of textiles from wool, flex, hemp, silk and cotton was an integral part of European manufactures during the middle Ages. The woollen textiles were manufactured in all parts of the continent and all sections of population used them. The large scale manufacturing of woollens was evident in Italy, England and Belgica, the land between the Somme and the Moselle.

The manufacturing of cloth passed through different stages in Europe with the changing technology. Both skilled and unskilled workers were employed in the flourishing woollen industry of Southern Italy. In this region, sheep were reared on a big scale. Most of the raw wool in the coastal areas was filled, dyed and finished. It produced high priced cloth. At Pompeii the work of fullers is vividly described in the frescoes of the House of the Vettii. The production process described on the walls of a fullonica depicted various stages. Firstly the raw webs were pounded under foot in a tronph. For it, water, soap and fuller's earth was used. This cleansing process produced compact unshrinkable cloth. It was around two third of the length of the original web. The cloth was washed and then dried on the frame, producing the exact length of the original web.

In the Northern Italy, woollen industry grew in the Po basin. Several items were produced, Patavium produced stout frieze called gansape. Verona was known for its blankets.

At the end of the eighth century woollen industry developed in the English Kingdoms and the Northeast part of the Carolingian Empire. The fine quality cloaks were highly valued for their wool and colour. In the household industries, primitive warp weighted looms were used by the peasants to produce wool. This industry was given impetus by the Viking people in the North Sea region. They generated more demand for woollen cloth through expanding trade. By the beginning of the twelfth century, small crafts men were organised around monasteries, cathedrals and castles.

In the Southern France, St Omer in Artois, Douai Lillie and Tournai were main clothing towns. The production of fine broad cloth in these towns involved many stages of operations. It engaged several craftsmen, each with his own specialised skill. Dyeing was done at any stage of manufacture of cloth. The dyers had knowledge of properties of various materials-wool, dyes and cleansing agents. The dyeing was separated into two distinct crafts – that of the dyeing on wool and the dyeing in red and other colours. It was carried out in large circular vats. The wool or cloth was turned over with long poles by the dyers or his assistants.

The weaving of woollens involved a number of operations starting from extracting wool to finished product. After shearing the sheep the preliminary operations of sorting involved beating and washing of the wool which did not require much skill. After sorting, wool was readied for spinning. Both carding and combing was used for short and long staple wool respectively. For small staple, wooden instruments, set with small metal hooks were used. For combing of long staple the wooden instruments with long metal teeth were used.

The wool, duly oiled, was spun into yarn. This work was mostly in the hands of women using spindle. The introduction of the spinning wheel during the thirteenth century greatly improved the process of spinning.

The next stage of manufacture was in the hands of weavers. The wrappers arranged the warp thread in the requisite number of thread of the requisite length. The spoolers wound the wool thread on to the bobbin (cylinder from which thread or yarn is unwound) for insertion in the shuttle. Two weavers, mostly men did the weaving of the broad cloths. They sat side by side at a broad double loom. For the weaving of narrow cloths, single loom was in use.

Fulling was an arduous operation. The old method of trampling in a trough was in usage in most of the towns. For fulling the cloth was placed in shallow troughs filled with water. The cloth was covered with fuller's earth. It was traded by men with feet. Later on the mechanical process was introduced for the purpose. Fulling was done to shrink the cloth so that lines of warp and weft were removed. The washed cloth was hung out to dry on a tenter. It was an upright wooden frame. According to the width of the cloth, it was fastened on this frame with the help of tenterhooks. The finishing and processing involving raising and shearing followed the tentering. The nap was the operation through which surface was given to the cloth by raising and then cutting and smoothing the short fibres. Once the cloth was dry, spear-grinder gave it a cutting edge of some eighteen inches. It resulted in the emergence of smooth surface of a fine cloth. At last, the cloth was brushed, processed and folded. During the above-mentioned stages of manufacturing, defects were also removed.

During thirteenth century many small units in local areas manufactured cloths. The Italian merchants were also importing wool and finished cloths from other regions. These were locally dyed and then were re-exported. It led to the development of cloth – finishing industry. In Genoa, for instance spearmen worked on the northern cloths. Lucca, famous for its vermilion dyes was engaged in finishing cloths of Pyres.

In England, woollen industry was set up in numerous towns and villages. Many innovations were also used in this industry. The fulling mill was used during the twelfth century. In this mill the fulling of cloths was no longer done by men with their feet. For this purpose, tilt hammer system consisting of two wooden hammers was used. These were raised and dropped upon the cloth by means of a revolving drum attached to the spindle of a waterwheel. In this process, waterpower replaced human energy. It involved the use of less human labour as one person could supervise the entire operation. The bishop of Winchester set up such fulling mills in 1209. He leased these mills to earn profits. It was observed that the wide spread use of fulling mills during the fourteenth century determined its locale. It required watercourses and the existence of such watercourses in rural England facilitated the setting up of that several fulling mills in villages. There is evidence to suggest that almost all the villages on both the Essex and Suffolk banks of the Stour built fulling mills.

During thirteenth century Norfolk was known for producing light cloth of high quality. For it, long wool was used. The wool was only combed and required little milling. This sort of production of cloth was used for the furnishings of houses. It was initially known as serge but gradually was given the name of worsted. Such identification was probably due to the fact that production was chiefly located at Worsted.

For the dyeing Kermes (mineral which gave red dye) was brought from Asia Minor, Spain and Portugal. Indigo, which gave a blue dye, was imported to Europe from India.

19.3 POTTERY, PROCELAIN AND CERAMICS

Pottery making was an integral part of all societies in the world. It was mainly a household activity and fulfilled local needs. However it was in China that manufacturing of Porcelain and Ceramics was developed and it became an important commodity of foreign trade. Under the T'ang dynasty, white porcelain with a special coating was discovered. Porcelain is a type of earthenware, vitrified to the point of becoming translucid. It is produced from clay which when heated at the temperature of about 1350o turns white. The clay is mixed with the powder of white stone obtained from a felspar base known as petuntse. The blending of both results in emergence of hard and brilliant material.

There was greater use of pottery in Asia. The firing workshops producing finer quality of ceramics were active in the entire Moslem world. There was use of potters' wheel consisting of a slopping tray. Over it, wooden axis supported a piece of wood in the shape of a disc. The whole rested on a crossbar. The craftsman with his foot, an action requiring no great consumption of energy, turned the Lower wheel. In consequence of its inclination, the tray was carried round and over by its own weight.

After the shaping of pots the baking process was undertaken. Different ways of baking were prevalent for clay and porcelain.

19.4 GLASS MAKING

In Europe, The growth of glass industry was linked with the church. With the construction of church buildings, demand for stained glass window also rose. The stained glass window is a glass mosaic having multiple colours. A fragment of coloured glass represents each colour. These were prepared from ferruginous sand containing alumina. The use of metallic oxides was used for giving them colour. The process of blowing resulted in the production of plates of uneven thickness. These were cut with red-hot iron and pincers. The use of produced glasses depended on a given model. These pieces of glass were assembled accordingly and were painted with a grey paste known as grisaille. The insertion of these glasses in a lead frame added to the artistic effect.

In the thirteenth century, there was a greater demand for bigger stained glass windows. The workshops like those of charters and Paris produced them in bulk. The basic models and stabilization of the painting in stained glass windows was simplified. For the everyday use, glass vessels were produced throughout Europe. Venice was the centre of such production Glass made in Belgium and Bohemia (in East Europe) was also in great demand.

19.5 METALLURGY AND MINING

The use of various metals and minerals was dependent upon their availability. The improvement in techniques deployed in mining and extracting metal led to increase in the production of various metals. The demand for iron was linked with demand for armaments and instruments. While copper and its various alloys were used in utensils, the precious metals like silver and gold were used for making ornaments, luxury items and coinage.

During the middle Ages, present-day Zimbabwe, after Nubra and West Africa was the main source of gold. The mines were dug up in the area since tenth century. Metal smelting was locally known. Filigree work, which was widespread in North Africa and Andalusia, reached Zimbabwe. Copper was also mined. The extraction techniques were limited to the digging of pits and horizontal galleries. There was use of Hammering and casting. The mining of iron ore and extraction of metal was common in all parts of the medieval World.

In India metallurgists worked with copper bronze, Iron, Lead, Tin, Silver and Gold. The ironsmiths were renowned for their work. For example, in the temple of Konark, iron girders more than ten metres long and nearly nineteen centimetres square in section were used.

The use of charcoal as fuel in China since thirteenth century helped in the refining of iron. It produced continuous fire, essential in metallurgy for the refining of iron. J. Needham has pointed out that the practice of 'co-lavation' dated back to sixth century in China. Under it, two sorts of iron were mixed and were heated continuously for days. As a result of continuous heating, metal underwent a change with the transfer of carbon. The repeated forging produced steel. This method was extensively used under the Sung dynasty. Japanese excelled Chinese in using steel to make sabre blades of high quality.

Gold was also mined in southern Egypt and Arabia. Gold prospectors made a search by keeping a watch on the soil. Once favourable signs were detected, search party started the work. Each member worked on the patch of land in which luminosity had been detected. The earth was carried to a nearby well for washing. It was then mixed with mercury and smelted. Egypt and Sudan had alum. Natron was found in the famous desert of Nitro. It was used for whitening copper, thread and linen.

Iron produced in China and India was of superior quality. Spain and Maghreb also produced iron. The production of steel entailed lengthy production process. Soft iron was placed in a vat. It was cleansed with salt and water. Myrobalan (astringent plum like fruit) was mixed with cleansed iron. It was subsequently placed in a melting pot and sprinkled with powdered magnesium. The entire process lasted many days. The use of hammering and filing produced iron pieces. Fine tempering involved severe processing based on the use of chemicals. It was heated, until red hot and was treated. Subsequently it was cooled and was ready to be used for manufacturing different articles.

In Europe, the available ores, woodlands and swift moving streams shaped growth of metallurgical works. The first stage in procuring metal was connected with the ownership of the land producing ore. In this regard, the very organization of mining and metallurgy was distinct from other crafts. The ruling families claimed shares in ore found in their areas. In Germany, France and England permission of mining was granted by the rulers. During twelfth century, special codes were formulated to organize this sector. For instance, in 1185, the bishop of Trent wrote such codes for Southern Tyrol. The king of Bohemia formed several laws for the miners of lglan during the thirteenth century.

In obtaining coal and metal, traditional methods of quarrying and digging were used. During thirteenth century, shaft mining was used extensively in central Europe for the digging of silver. The silver bearing ores were punctured with pits. For water drainage two methods were used. The leather buckets filled with water were bound up from a pit by a hand-turned windlass. Men, standing in row in an inclined shaft, could carry these buckets In Bohemia, by the end of thirteenth century; horse-driven machines were used for drawing water from the pits.

In the preparation and smelting of ores and the refining of metals, several techniques were used. The hand-labour was used for washing, breaking and crushing. It was smelters who devised a variety of hearths, trenches, pots, ovens and furnaces to treat different metals. For example sometimes, smelting was done in open-air hearths on the side of hills. Here the fires were fanned by the wind. In the treatment of iron-ore, the metal was produced at tiny forges equipped with bellows. In the silver mining ore was raised from the shafts. It was washed, broken, crushed and then smelted. The process produced argentiferous lead, which was subjected to oxidation in a cupelling hearth. It caused the removal of lead. The residual silver was refined in separately with bellows.

During the twelfth century hammers and stamps were used for breaking and crushing the ore. For heating, bellows were used. These were driven by hand or foot labour. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, water-driven wheels were set up at the silver mines of Trent. It was also put in use in the central Tyrol. During the fourteenth century, old bloomery forgers were replaced by Furnace.

19.6 ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION AND GUILDS

The organizational basis of varied crafts were not identical everywhere. In Arab world, village craftsmen were householders. The Umayyad caliphs monitored and controlled all craftsmen. Their lists were complied and in accordance with the emergent demand, craftsmen were sent to required places. In this way carpenters, embroiderers and masons moved from one place to another.

In China, craftsmen were employed in the arsenals, imperial workshops, iron and salt mines. Under the T'ang dynasty, corporation (hang) subject to strict supervision emerged in China. These were in towns and enjoyed autonomy.

In Japan, craftsmen were organized in clans. The authorities employed them. They also worked in the Temples. In such situating, these craftsmen occupied a position known as the Za. At the end of the twelfth century the Za demanded monopolistic rights.

In India, royal *karkhanas* were under the state jurisdiction of rulers and nobles. These *karkhanas* employed large number of artisans and craftsmen. The articles produced in these *karkhanas* were not for market but for the consumption of royal household or personal use of nobles. Everywhere minting was controlled by the state. In France and England, minting represented structure of medieval factory workers were concentrated in a single workshop headed by a licensed moneyer. Initially regional princes or local communities controlled such operations but by the late thirteen century, government came to exercise authority over minting. In India mints were controlled by State but it was open to everybody. One could take the silver to a mint. Coins were minted and handed over. The metal content and quality was ensured by the officials of the mint. Separate charges for minting were taken by the mints.

It was the Guilds, which provided organizational basis to various industries in Europe. It has been pointed out that the origins of the Medieval European guilds could be traced to the religious associations of German antiquity. Even during the ninth century, guilds existed in the Carolingian empire. By the beginning of the eleventh century guilds were formed in cities. These could be broadly divided into organisations having merchants as their members and those formed by artisans. The objectives of both were different.

The aim of merchant guilds was to increase their profits. For this purpose, these guilds imposed strict working regulations on workers and paid them low salaries. These guilds enjoyed political power and used laws to defend their interests. These guilds also regularized activities among the merchants. They were known as either guild or Hanes in the Germanic countries and caritas in the Roman countries.

During the twelfth century several organizations regulating industrial activity were called guilds. These were set up in England, Normandy, Holland and part of Northern Germany. Each guild comprised craftsmen belonging to particular profession. It also had its patron saint and in the process generated strong sense of identity among members. In most European cities, these were designated by the Latin name officium. These guilds regulated production processes. They enjoyed monopolies and devised methods to eliminate competition.

In each guild a hierarchical group of workers could be identified. There were masters, apprentices and journeymen. The workers owned raw materials and tools and could be defined as small entrepreneurs. Many journeymen who had completed their apprenticeship could acquire status of master but many could not obtain the rank of master. During this period it was noted that the number of masters was small. To become a master, one was required to possess capital and higher social status.

The working conditions of artisans were dependent on several factors. The very nature of production played a crucial role. In Europe, production was mainly organized on household level. Small artisans possessed raw material and tools to produce for local needs. Rodney Hilton has pointed out that there were specialist artisans within the households and the demesne of lay and ecclesiastical magnates. There also existed village craftsmen. It was smiths who also possessed landed holdings. Their surplus labour was used as a rent in horseshoes, and for repairing the growing demand of interregional ploughshares. It meant that there was simple commodity production.

The available evidences indicate that industrial craftsmen existed in urban communities even before the thirteenth century. They were manufacturing commodities for sale. There also emerged monopolistic guilds. The relationship between artisans and merchants was complicated. Not all artisans had resources to produce independently. Big merchants met the growing demand of interregional trade. To increase production ‘putting out system’ came into existence. In the putting out system the intermediaries made their way into the production process. The merchants provided raw material to artisans and artisans handed over the produced goods. Now the artisan, who were always short of money to procure raw material were getting regular supply and were paid the piece rate. The artisan though was not reduced to the level of wage earner lost control over the marketing of produce. The merchants in turn were assured of a regular supply and had some control over quality also. The middleman controlling putting out system were either merchants or master craftsmen and cornered substantial profits. The system helped in increasing the production. Many a times artisans, in putting out system, worked at their own places with their own tools. In certain cases where raw material involved was expensive or valuable artisans could be asked to work at a designated place by the provider.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

The overall artisanal production in medieval period had a range of organizations of production. Most simple type of production was carried through by individual artisans either at their homes or shops. Many a time they moved from village to village to make the articles of daily use and marketed them. In some areas of production peasants were also involved in their spare time. This was more common in spinning yarn (where women also worked) or working in mineral (as in saltpetre fields in India). At another level craftsmen employed hired labour or engaged apprentices and journeymen in their small workplaces (the number of such persons engaged was very small). In certain areas of production larger groups of persons were engaged and included both skilled and unskilled. Such a situation was prevalent in larger ventures like mining minerals and metals (and extracting metals from ore), shipbuilding and construction activities. Many instances of large scale engagement of artisans are also found in the process of production of arms or luxury items for state and royalty. But such production was not for market but personal use of royalty or ventures of state.

In cases where individual artisan production was the mode specializations had emerged. For example in textile production different operations and process had specialised workmen to take care of each stage. Carding, spinning, weaving, washing (or fulling in woollens), and dying (in case of cottons even printing) all had skilled craftsmen to take care of each activity separately as a distinct artisan group.

19.7 WORKING CONDITIONS

The position of artisans was determined by possession of skills. The unskilled workers were paid low wages and were not organized.

The role of guilds in providing secure working conditions to workers was limited. In many instance they lacked resources and political power to increase their profits. For instance, in Florence, when masters were unable to generate resources for procuring raw material, they accepted the domination of capitalist merchants. These merchants provided the workers with cloth and sold the manufactured items. Several workers in Florence were engaged in the processes of washing, combing and carding. However they did not have personal tools. They mostly worked in the entrepreneur's capital shop and were under the supervision of his foremen. In India in the 17th century, the system of advancing money to artisans was prevalent to get required quantities of cotton, silk and saltpeter.

The working conditions were hard for workers. In Flanders and England the workers were required to work throughout the day, except for a mid day break of one and a half hours. The working week varied from sixty hours and more in summer to some forty-four hours in winter.

The wages also varied. The master weavers, fullers, dyers and shear men having personal equipments were paid more. The wages given to beaters and washers were very low. In building construction where large number of workers were engaged as masons or stone cutters etc. the conditions were harsh. If such construction was for state, or nobles or church (These were the people who commissioned large scale construction) a certain degrees of coercion was also used to make craftsmen work.

During the thirteenth century, it was seen that workers resorted to strikes to demand for more wages. There were series of trade disputes in Flanders. The unrest unleashed by workers in 1280 spread to Bruges, Yyres, Donai and Tournai. There was protest against the power and privileges of the communal oligarchies. There emerged a close nexus between artisans, small merchants and drapers. For the redressal of their grievances, artisans appealed to the courts. Against them, employers sought help from the King of France. Thus local economic issue got mixed with polity. The invasion and annexation of Flanders by the King of France became an occasion for the workers to rise in popular uprising. Pierre de Coninc, a weaver provided leadership to fullers, weavers and shear men at Bruges.

The unrest of craftsmen was a regular feature in other parts of Europe. In 1302 weavers and fullers of Brussels, Louain and Anterwerp rose in revolt. They were successful in destroying the power of merchant guilds. They became influential in local polity. However, this success was short lived. The Duke defeated the rebels on the field of Vivorde in 1306.

Several restrictions prevailed in England. At Leicester, in 1275 fullers were accused for holding an illegal meeting. In 1378 Ciompi revolt named after unorganized workers in the woollen industry was an attempt to get political rights in Florence. The attempt was a joint struggle of armourers, grocers, doublet-makers, druggists, blacksmiths, furriers and hosiers. However the member of the established guilds did not help them. The revolt was brutally suppressed. Thus the power remained in the hands of mercantile and financial oligarchy. Such instance pointed out the differentiated position of workers. The condition of unskilled and unorganized workers was pitiable. The redressal of their grievances was intertwined with prevailing polity. Latter was controlled and shaped by dominant classes.

19.8 SUMMARY

In this Unit on Craft Production we have provided a brief account of the non-agricultural production in the medieval world. As is evident the most extensive craft was textile production, which was manufactured in all parts of the world. During this period different regions emerged as the main centres of various types of textiles production. Europe dominated in the area of woollens, China in Silks, India and some other regions of Asia and Africa in cotton textiles while Central Asia and parts of Arabia in carpet weaving. Large scale trade across regions in textiles contributed in the increase in quantities produced.

Pottery making was also prevalent in all parts of the world but the porcelain of China dominated the scene. The glass manufacture, like porcelain was confined to certain regions only. Europe dominated in this sector.

Metallurgy was practiced to some extent in all parts of the world but this was mainly true of iron only other metals were not as widely available. Copper, silver, gold, tin and lead were worked upon in certain regions only. Of these gold and silver were extensively used for minting currency and for ornaments.

Changes in organization of production are noticeable during the period. The individual artisanal production was dominant in most of the crafts. Through putting out system the quantum of production increased but craftsmen lost control over procurement of raw material and marketing the products.

These were taken over by the merchants who controlled the two processes. Specialization of different stages and operations of production also took place. This was most evident in textile production. In certain sectors large number of craftsmen was engaged for the production activity. Ship building, mining and building construction were the main spheres where such a process dominated. Guilds and other similar organizations were formed to have a better control in various trades. These organizations mainly helped the craftsmen of substance only. Growing commercial activities increased the total quantum of production. The growth of production mainly benefited the state, merchants and bigger craftsmen. Large mass of craftsmen continued to struggle to maintain their hold on the production process and earn their living.

19.9 EXERCISES

1) Briefly discuss the production of textiles in the medieval period.
2) Give a brief account of the use of various metals in the middle ages.
3) Explain the organization of production and guilds.
4) Write short notes on
    i) putting out system
    ii) working conditions of craftsmen.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 20 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGIES AND EXPANSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Structure

20.1 Introduction

20.2 Scientific Legacy of Earlier Period

20.3 World Turned Outside-In: Advances in Astronomy

- 20.3.1 Contribution of Copernicus
- 20.3.2 Tycho Brahe: Observing the Stars
- 20.3.3 Elliptical Orbits of Johannes Kepler

20.4 Beginnings of the Experimental Method

20.5 Institutionalization of Science

20.6 Major Scientific Advances

- 20.6.1 Physics and Mechanics
- 20.6.2 Life Sciences
- 20.6.3 Chemistry and Others

20.7 Some Interpretations of Scientific Revolution

20.8 Development of Tools and Methods: Towards a Better Mastery Over Nature

- 20.8.1 Sources of Power
- 20.8.2 Transport and Navigation
- 20.8.3 Printing Technology
- 20.8.4 Some Other Major Technological Changes

20.9 Impact on Society

20.10 Summary

20.11 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

20.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long span of history most views of the world were of spiritual and mythological kind. However, the human beings also began developing tools to master the nature around them. The development of modern science was of tremendous long-term significance. In earlier civilizations, people developed practical tools, systems and technologies for managing civilization they had built. The last years of the 15th century and the early years of the 16th century laid the foundation of the modern worldview. There was an intellectual shift when ideas about nature and society underwent a radical transformation. The men of science were charting unknown shores. This period coincided with phenomenal advances in geographical knowledge and technology. While scientists were challenging many established notions about the universe and human anatomy, other Europeans were making extensive reconnaissance or preliminary explorations of the whole earth. In fact, it has been argued that scientific revolution was the real origin of both the modern world and modern outlook, while Renaissance and Reformation were mere episodes, mere internal displacement of emphasis within the medieval ideology. The scientific revolution is usually taken to signify the contrast with the superstitious irrationality that is presumed to have been the cultural and intellectual signature of the Middle Ages. The seed of scientific revolution sprouted in the form of the Enlightenment, the bourgeois ideology of the age of capital, which established reason as the motor and measure of historical change. Everything was to be submitted to the rational, critical, "scientific" way of thinking. A second important Enlightenment concept was that the scientific method was capable of discovering the laws of nature as well as those of human society. This gave birth to social sciences. The third key idea that of progress, linked to the applicability of scientific thinking to human-existence, followed.

In this Unit, our objective is to make you aware about the role of a new perception of universe that emerged around sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This new perception called "scientific revolution" moulded many institutions of the period. These new perceptions mainly influenced the European society and changed its intellectual world. The Unit will focus on many of these changes in outlook and behaviours, apart from various advances in the field of knowledge during transition from medieval times to modernity. You will also learn about the beginnings of new methods of experimentation, observation and interpretation used by the men of science and how science and its methods were institutionalized. Moreover, we will also try to explore the relationship between science, technology and society in the Western World and its implications for the new world order that emerged with the advent of modernity.

20.2 SCIENTIFIC LEGACY OF EARLIER PERIOD

Many developments in astronomy and physics were at the core of scientific revolution, we can trace the legacy of this intellectual current in the traditional European ideas about the universe. Arab scientists such as Averroes played a key role in the development of science during the Middle Ages, not only through their own contributions, but also through preservation and transmission of the ancient Greek scientific tradition. In 12th and 13th centuries, the medieval scholastics in monasteries and institutions of learning throughout Europe adopted many works of Greek science from their Arabic contacts. The medieval intellectual life and universities left their imprints on the scientific revolution. By the thirteenth century, permanent universities with professors and large student bodies had been established in Western Europe. These Universities received social support because they educated and trained such professionals in diverse areas as lawyers, doctors and church leaders. The emergence of modern science was not an accident. The men of science built their paradigms upon the ideas of their predecessors. However, the Church dominated the Western World. Other ideas were brought into harmony with the official Christian doctrines. According to prevalent notion in the medieval universities, a motionless earth was fixed at the centre of the universe and ten separate, transparent, crystal spheres moved around it. The moon, the sun, the five known planets and the fixed stars were embedded in the first eight spheres. Two more spheres were added during the Middle Ages to account for slight changes in the positions of the stars over the centuries. Beyond the tenth sphere was heaven, with the throne of god and the souls of the saved.

20.3 WORLD TURNED OUTSIDE-IN: ADVANCES IN ASTRONOMY

Copernicus, Tycho and Kepler were three learned men who introduced revolutionary changes in the way their contemporary society perceived the world. They provided new insights about the earth and the universe through their works in the area of Astronomy. Astronomy was an old science patronised because it was believed that celestial bodies influenced Kingdoms and human-life. As a result of such beliefs the study of the positions of planets and stars in the sky became an important area of study. Copernicus clung to the Aristotelian idea of crystalline spheres and the idea that the stars hung on an outer sphere. But he was not fully convinced because the observed facts failed to fit in the theory. He, therefore, tried to figure out his facts from a different perspective. He thought that the Sun, not the Earth, might be at the centre. Still the observed facts did not quite fit with his new hypothesis. But it came a lot closer than any other idea ever put forward earlier. Tycho's scheme again put the Earth back in the centre of things and he collected massive data bank of observations to prove his point. His honest and careful observations did not validate his claims but his massive data was later on utilised by Kepler. Kepler believed that the orbits of planets must be circular – the perfect harmonious creation of God. But the observed facts indicated that planets orbited the Sun in elliptical (oval) paths rather than circular ones. The work of these three men marks the beginning of modern astronomy. In the following sub-sections of the Unit we will focus on their contribution in a systematic way.

20.3.1 Contribution of Copernicus

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), the Polish clergyman and astronomer studied Church law and astronomy in various European universities such as Krakow, Bologna, Padua and Ferrara. He was bothered by many inconsistencies in the Ptolemaic (geo-centric) model of the universe. The earth-centered model of Ptolemy, the last great astronomer, who lived in Alexandria in the second century A.D, did not fit with many actual observed facts about planets and stars. It was also a complex and unwieldy system of spheres and epicycles. In order to explain the apparent retrograde motion of planets, Ptolemy explained that each planet moved in small circles around an invisible centre, which in term moved in a larger circle orbiting the Earth. This basic concept, which he called epicycles, served roughly to reconcile the differences between observation and Aristotle's earlier theory that all heavenly objects rotated around the Earth in concentric spheres, set one within the other. The great medieval scholar, William of Ockham (1285-1349) had cautioned against adopting such complicated theories. Copernicus also preferred an old Greek idea that Sun rather than earth was at the centre of the universe. Copernicus worked on this hypothesis from about 1506 to 1530. He made mathematical calculations to see the results of a heliocentric or sun-centred universe. The result of his work was published as *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* in 1543, the year of his death.

The earth, Copernicus maintained, revolves around its own axis once every 24 hours, causing the heavens to appear overhead. The sun's distance from the earth, he believed was negligible compared to the great distance of fixed stars.

The apparent motion of the sun through an annual cycle is caused by the earth revolving round the sun. Only moon, he said, revolves around the earth. And the strange, mysterious retrogressions (backward movement) of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are caused by the fact, that they like the earth are moving around the sun – but farther away. The earth, travelling in a smaller orbit around the sun, would sometimes pass up these outer planets in their longer orbits, making them look like they were moving backward across the sky. This was a simpler and neat theory compared to complicate and messy Ptolemaic theory.

Copernicus's theory had enormous scientific and religious implications. It destroyed the main reson for believing in crystal spheres capable of moving stars around the earth, because it was simply a result of the earth's rotation. It also suggested an infinite universe as earth took one year to revolve around sun and yet the stars appeared to remain in the same place. Finally, if earth was just another planet, Copernicus destroyed the basic idea of Aristotelian model– that earthly world was quite different from heavenly one. Where were heavens and the throne of God then? The Christian clergy, including Protestant Martin Luther and Calwin declared it false as it did not fit into Christian dogmas about the universe and its nature.

20.3.2 Tycho Brahe: Observing the Stars

The greatest astronomical observer before the invention of telescope was an eccentric and colorful Danish scientist named Tycho Brahe (1546-1601). Aided by generous grants from the King of Denmark, Brahe built the most sophisticated observatory of his times. For years, he collected a mass of data by meticulously observing stars and planets with naked eyes. The Copernicus model had simplicity, regularity and consistency, and it did make better astronomical predictions, at least some of the time, but Brahe clung to idea that all planets moved around the sun but the sun and planets revolved in turn around the earth. Tycho relied on exact measurements and observations to study stars, planets and comets. In observing a comet that appeared in 1577 Tycho found the comet followed an elliptical path deep in the skies. This delivered another blow to the idea of perfection in the heavens, since in Aristotelian system only circle was perfect. Tycho's assistant Johannes Kepler subsequently made brilliant use of his masterly and accurate data.

20.3.3 Elliptical Orbit of Johannes Kepler

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), the brilliant young German assistant of Tycho Brahe worked on his mentor's vast store of data. Observation showed that the planets travelled at variable speeds, at times slower, sometimes faster. Kepler also found that their speed increased as they drew closer to the sun. Kepler tested various hypotheses by performing voluminous calculations. After years of labour, he came to the conclusion that the orbits of planets could not be circular. In his work *Astronomia Nova* or "New Astronomy" (1609), Kepler propounded his first two laws of planetary motion. He abandoned his own platonic learning and contrary to Christian theology, he found that the planets moved in an elliptical path, a relatively imperfect oval path. Instead of having one centre, an eclipse has two foci. This was the substance of Kepler's first law. In his second law, Kepler described a planet's variations in speed during its orbit around the sun. According to it, a planet moves around the sun in such a way that if an imaginary line is drawn from the sun to the planet the planet would sweep over equal areas in equal periods of time. As a result, the closer the planet came to the sun, the shorter the imaginary line and faster the planet would have to move to cover an equal area.

Kepler published his third law of planetary motion in his book *Harmonies of the world* (1619). The square of any planet's period of revolution about the sun, he demonstrated, is proportional to the cube of its distance from the sun. Thus, Kepler, by precisely relating the time taken by a planet to make a revolution around the sun to its distance from the sun, explained only how planets moved, and not why they moved. As it turned out that Kepler's law of planetary motion holds true for celestial bodies that Kepler did not know about. For example, Galileo later observed that the four moons of Jupiter that he discovered through his telescope, moved around the planets according to the same laws.

20.4 BEGINNINGS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

Many of early men of science did engage in it for sheer love of it. They were not professional modern scientists earning living from science. Yet they adopted new methods of observation, experimentation and classification of natural phenomenon while investigating problems. Galileo's experiments, which he carefully recorded step by step and his conclusions based on experiments, demonstrate another attribute of modern science – that the experiments could be duplicated to verify results of an earlier experiment, or by looking for errors in the experiments, results could be partially or wholly modified. However, science is more than mere observation, experimentation and classified presentation of result. The careful gathering of variable data and figures through experiments is not the sole pathway followed by the scientists. Many of them create 'theories', but ultimately such theories must be verifiable by experiment and observation. Although Galileo often gets the credit for being the first scientist to regularly employ the new methods of observation and experimentation, some others also pioneered this method. William Gilbert (1544-1603), the English Physician and Physicist, studied magnetism using a series of detailed experiments and observations. The English thinker Francis Bacon (1561-1626) rejected the Aristotelian and medieval method of using speculative reasoning to build general theories. He stressed on the value of empirical, experimental research, thus formalising the empirical method into a general theory of inductive reasoning known as empiricism. It was a process of reasoning that establishes general truths on the basis of particular instances or empirical data.

20.5 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SCIENCE

The educated middle classes of Western Europe like lawyers, doctors and members of nobility and clergy expressed their concern for scientific matters. The practitioners of the highly specialized crafts such as surveying, metallurgy, military engineering, clock-making, industrial-chemistry and instrument-making also were pre-occupied with scientific matters of their times. From mid-17th century science became more institutionalized. London Royal Society grew out of informal gatherings of scientists from 1645 onwards. In 1662 it was formally constituted for promotion of scientific knowledge. In its initial years the Royal Society was more concerned with the use of scientific discoveries for practical, utilitarian purposes such as construction of better instruments and equipments and devising of techniques suited to the commercial, manufacturing problems of the times. The French Royal Academy inspired by the French mercantilist, Colbert, became the model for many such societies established all over Europe. Astronomy still continued to be favored by scientists, although, engineering, hydraulics, navigation, medicine, chemistry, optics and physiology also assumed great significance. Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1627) described a research institution equipped with many tools of modern sciences including laboratories, libraries and printing presses. His ideas led to a trend towards professionalization of scientific pursuits. Others especially French writer, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757) popularized science among the ordinary people through their writings.

20.6 MAJOR SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES

The early breakthroughs made by Copernicus, Tycho and Kepler opened a window and allowed the fresh air of scientific enquiry into a long-closed and musty room. Many giants followed them – Galileo and Newton in Physics, Vesalius, the anatomist, Paracelsus, the Physician, William Harvey, the Physiologist and many others. Each of them made significant contribution in his field and further advanced the cause of scientific thinking. In three sub-sections we will discuss some of these men and their contributions.

20.6.1 Physics and Mechanics

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the Italian scientist stressed the need for carefully controlled experiments. He combined observation, measurement and mathematical analysis to look for cause and effect relationships among natural events. He discovered many basic principles of mechanics. In his famous acceleration experiment, he showed that a uniform force produced a uniform acceleration. He also formulated the famous law of inertia, that is, rather than rest being the natural state of objects, an object continues in motion forever unless stopped by some external force. On hearing the invention of telescope in Flanders, Galileo procured one for himself and used it to study celestial bodies. He quickly discovered the first four moons of Jupiter. He found that the Milky Way in the sky was a big cluster of innumerable stars and that surface of moon was not smooth and uniform. Galileo was employed by the Medicis of Tuscany. His work eventually aroused the ire of some theologians. After the publication of his work *Dialogue on the Two Chief Systems of the World* (1632), which lampooned the Aristotelian views and Ptolemy's astronomy and defended Copernicus, Galileo was tried for heresy by the papal Inquisition and imprisoned. Under such tremendous pressure and persecution Galileo withdrew his opinion publicly, "renouncing and cursing" his Copernican errors.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727) combined experimental and inductive approach of Bacon, Galileo and Gilbert with the quantitative approach. He applied mathematical tools to arrive at and frame experimental results. Newton used the findings of others to develop a unified view of the forces of the universe. In his *Principia* (1687) or *the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, he formulated his famous three laws of motion as well as a law of universal gravitation. The first law of inertia merely summarized what Galileo had already said: An object at rest tends to stay at rest. An object in motion tends to continue at constant speed in a straight line. His second law of motion states that if more force is placed on an object, the more it accelerates. But the more massive it is, the more it resists acceleration. Finally, the third law that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Newton used the three laws as a basis for calculating the gravitational force between the earth and the moon. He came to the conclusion that it is directly proportional to the product of the masses of two bodies and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between their centres. This law of attraction was same throughout the universe and it also explained all of Kepler's laws. Newton's study of lenses and prisms laid the foundation for the study of modern optics. Furthermore, Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a German philosopher, independently developed a new system of mathematics, Calculus.

20.6.2 Life Sciences

The same year that Nicolaus Copernicus published his helio-centric theory, Andreas Vesalius ((1514-64), a Belgian anatomist, published his tradition-breaking work, *On the Fabric of the Human Body* (1543). In this work, Vesalius laid out in detail the most precise anatomical knowledge of the day, based on his observations he made while dissecting human corpses. His book gradually replaced those of Galen and Avicenna. Galen's anatomy and medicinal theories were based on dissection of animal corpses in A D.100's. Avicenna was also an influential Arab Physician of late 900's and early 1000's. Galen, the Greek Physician's work, *On Anatomical Preparations*, remained the standard text of anatomy in the European Universities. It contained many significant errors. Vesalius tried to remove Galen's errors in his path-breaking work on human-anatomy, although he retained many ideas of Galenic physiology.

How traditions continued to impose their hold on the minds of 16th century scientists can be illustrated with the example of Paracelsus (1493-1541), the Swiss Physician. He ridiculed Galen's medicinal theory that accounted for diseases in terms of some internal imbalance of imaginary humors. Instead he hinted at external sources and causes of diseases, some substances absorbed through air or by contact with skin. It was perhaps, one of the earliest versions of germ theory. However, Paracelsus was also a firm believer in alchemy, whose major objective was to transform base metals into gold and to discover the elixir of life to obtain immortality. Paracelsus was not only deeply immersed in the magic and superstition of the alchemist's art, but also believed in astrological belief that different parts of the human body were governed by the planets.

The scientific revolution also extended too many other areas. Modern physiology began in the early 1600's with the work of William Harvey (1578 – 1657), an English Doctor. Harvey performed careful experiments and used simple mathematics to show how blood circulates through the human body. He published his understanding on the circulation of blood in his masterpiece, On *the Movement of Heart and Blood in Animals* (1628).

The Dutch microscope-maker Zacharias Janssen was probably the first to use combined lenses to aid their magnifying power around 1590. Marcello Malpighi (1628-94) made microscopic study of wing membranes of bats and discovered small blood vessels, later called capillaries, connecting the smallest visible arteries to the smallest- visible veins. Robert Hooke's book, *Micrographia* (1665) contained some of the most exacting and beautiful drawing ever made of microscopic studies. It was Dutch scientist, Antony van Leeuvanhock (1632-1723), who observed a fantastic new micro-universe of protozoa and bacteria.

20.6.3 Chemistry and Others

In the mid - sixteenth century, Robert Boyle, an Irish scientist, helped establish the experimental method in chemistry. Boyle introduced many new ways of identifying the chemical composition of substances. However, it was in 1700's that modern chemistry developed. Scientists developed techniques necessary for isolating and studying gases in their pure forms. They discovered chlorine, hydrogen and carbon-dioxide. Oxygen was discovered by the Swedish chemist Carl Scheele in the early 1700's and independently by the English chemist Joseph Priestley in 1774. By 1777, Antonne Lovoisier of France had discovered the nature of combustion as a process of rapid union of burning material with oxygen. He also proved the law of conservation of matter which states that matter cannot be created or destroyed but only changes its form.

William Gilbert (1544-1603), the English Physician made a long series of carefully detailed experiments and observation on the nature of magnetism. His book, *About Magnates* (1600) was a classic of experimental science. Gilbert concluded that the Earth itself behaved like a giant magnet with its magnetic poles very near its geographical poles. Gilbert's researches into magnetism and its properties were not surpassed until well into the 18th century when scientists began to investigate intensively on magnetism and electricity.

20.7 SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

The origin of scientific revolution has been keenly debated by the historians of science and other scholars. One viewpoint sees development of science as autonomous creation of a few individuals' geniuses and great personalities with insight. Butterfield, for instance, stresses the role of individual genius. Other scholars relate the scientific developments to changes in societal, economic needs of the rising middle classes. They stress the lowering of social barriers between the scholars and craftsmen, the new technical needs of a dynamic society undergoing demographic change, rising productivity and commercial expansion and changes in cultural and religious spheres as factors responsible for the scientific developments. These trends, they believe led to a fusion of empiricism and rationalism (a product of Renaissance and Reformation), thus giving birth to a new kind of science based on observation and experimentation. However, it is difficult to see a direct link between a new secularized society, the technical needs of rising middle classes and the birth of science. Many of the people who contributed to 16th and 17th century scientific development belonged to the most divergent social groups and environments. They were professionals-university teachers, physicians, surveyors, engineers and noblemen. Many of them were steeped into medieval world of religion and magic, trying to find explanations worthy of God's perfect creation. The Medieval universities were not free from the burden of theology. The Renaissance humanism also did not make a direct contribution to the development of science, nor was it able to purge religious ideology and traditional world-view and authority of classics from universities. In a way, the works of scientific pioneers, as they refused to base their conclusions on traditions and established sources or ancient authorities, were their own creations, autonomous of social environment in which they lived.

We know that early discoveries of science were resented by the religious authorities including Protestant Martin Luther. The ideas of scientist were found to be opposite to the world-view of clergy. However, some scholars feel that experimental science, as a corollary of the Protestant ethic, was one of the most significant ideological manifestations of the Reformation. They point out the involvement of Calvinism in the development of science and scientific societies. They argue that the early Protestant ethos and scientific attitudes were similar and that there was certain congruence between the Protestant theology and notions of scientists. Christopher Hill, the renowned English historian, also tried to relate the puritan social ethic of merchant artisan classes with the intellectual development of experimental science. It is argued that the bourgeoisie encouraged science and Puritanism and adopted social attitudes conducive to scientific advance. The endeavour required active co-operation of craftsmen and practical puritan merchants. Such groups might have encouraged certain technological advancement as is symbolized by the stress on navigational techniques in the Gresham College formed by Thomas Gresham, the great London merchant and financier. This was an attempt to turn science in the service of solving vital practical problems. Such co-operation between practical puritan merchants and scientific activity, however, was rare. Resolution of certain practical technical problems did lead to better instruments such as the telescope, the barometer, the thermometer, the clock, the microscope and the air pump. These instruments were utilized for obtaining more knowledge. However, as we know from the background of many scientists of 16th and 17th century, they were trained and skilled in universities for a conceptual task far beyond the capacities of practical unschooled men.

20.8 DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS AND METHODS: TOWARDS A BETTER MASTERY OVER NATURE

There has been a considerable debate on whether Puritanism and the merchant classes correlated in any way to scientific development and technological changes. It appears that specific technological advances in this period were results of the skill of craftsmen while scientific revolution was product of middle class educated men. Their achievements owed little to the actual technical tools and methods of the workshops. In other words, the brilliant work of men of science was different from the world of practical and often unlearned craftsmen who made new innovative tools. Many of the discoveries of scientists of this period had no immediate practical utility. On the other hand, technology and its tools and instruments served the cause of scientific revolution.

20.8.1 Sources of Power

Many of sources of power used in the Western Europe were still the inventions of Middle Ages. For instance, the invention of horse-shoe, the paddled rigid horse collar and the stirrup transformed horse as a major source of power. Horse became more efficient draft animal due to harnessing of horse collar to the heavy plough. It could also be easily put to military use. Apart from animal power, Europe inherited from the Middle Ages use of Norse Water-Mill, using a horizontally mounted waterwheel driving a pair of grind stone directly and a modified version of Water-Mill known as Greek Mill. The Water-Mills were extensively used in grinding of grain, sawing of wood, crushing of vegetable seeds for oil and in woolen textile industry.

Wind-mills were another major source of power especially in low-lying areas where rivers could offer little energy such as Spain, the down lands of England and the fenlands and polders of the Netherlands. By 15th century, the post-mill (in which the whole body of the mill pivots on a post and can be turned to face the sails into the wind) were substituted by the tower-mill type of construction. In the latter, the body of the mill remained stationary with only the cap moving to turn the sails into the wind.

Mineral coal partly replaced wood and charcoal as the source of heat in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was used in several industries in Western Europe such as production of metals, bricks, glass, salt, soap and textiles.

20.8.2 Transport and Navigation

In the field of land transport, some improvements were achieved in road-making. There were also experiments in bridge-building and construction of canals. Canal du Midi (1692) between the Mediterranean and the Bay of Biscay stretching over 241 kms was a marvel of civil-engineering feat. The canal had a hundred locks, a tunnel and three aqueducts, many culverts and a large summit reservoir.

However, major breakthroughs came in the field of navigation which saw building of ocean-going ships dependent entirely on wind power. The European ships combined traditional square sail with Arab triangular Lanteen sail, an innovation that allowed ships so equipped to sail close to the wind. The adoption of stern-post rudder increased the maneuverability of ships. Introduction of magnetic compass provided a means of checking direction on the open sea in any weather. Other fifteenth century developments also helped in the conquest of seas. The astrolabe, an instrument Arabs had invented as early as twelfth century, could be used to determine the altitude of sun and other celestial bodies. It permitted marines to plot their latitude or position in relation to equator. Better navigational charts, maps and manuals further assisted this conquest. The substitution of wind power for manpower, and mounting of cannons on ships gave Europeans advantage over other people. Cipola aptly remarked about the opening of China to the West “While Buddha came to China on white elephants; Christ was borne on cannon balls.”

20.8.3 Printing Technology

The invention of printing in the mid-1400 by Johannes Gutenberg of Germany combined several existing technical practices such as ink, movable type, paper and the press. Printing proved to be a cost-effective and easier way of disseminating information and knowledge. Pi Sheng, a Chinese alchemist, had conceived of movable type made of an amalgam of clay and glue by baking around 1041-48. He composed texts by placing the types side by side on an iron plate coated with a mixture of resin, wax, and paper ash. Gently heating this plate and then letting the plate cool solidified the type. Once the impression had been made, the type could be detached by re-heating the plate. By 12th century, paper had been diffused as an invention through trade routes by Arabs to the European lands. Paper-mills were built in Italy, France and Germany in 13th and the 14th centuries using these techniques. Similarly, the knowledge of typographic process was spread by Ulighars, a nomadic people on the border of Mongolia and Turkistan.

Johannes Gutenberg combined the process of typography with the concept of printing press. He used association of die, matrix and lead in the production of durable typefaces in large number and with each letter strictly identical. He made type-pieces with alloy of lead, tin and antimony. Tin was used because lead would have oxidized rapidly and casting would have deteriorated the lead mould matrices. Antimony was used because lead and tin alone would have lacked durability. The printing press itself, vital for securing a firm and uniform print over the whole page, was an adoption of the screw press already familiar in the wine press and other applications. The printing press with a lower level fixed surface and a movable level upper surface moved vertically by means of a small bar on a worm screw. The composed type, after being locked by screwed tight into a right metal frame, was inked, covered with a sheet of paper to be printed, and then the whole was pressed between two surfaces.

The first major workshop, using this technique, was established at Mainz (1455-56). Soon many such work-shops were established in commercial centres of Germany, Italy and France. The printing technology was introduced in England by William Caxton in the last quarter of 15th century. Soon the revolutionary potential of this new technology was realized. It became an essential medium of commercial, social, religious and scientific communication. By 1500, about 40,000 recorded editions of books were printed in European countries.

20.8.4 Some Other Major Technological Changes

Mechanical clock was another significant technical device manufactured during 14th and 15th centuries. By mid-15th century, clocks driven by springs were constructed. It led to the development of more compact mechanism and opened the way for portable clocks. The problem of diminishing power of clock's spring as it unwound was solved by simple compensating mechanism of the fusse – a conical drum on the shaft that permitted to exert an increasing momentum as its power declined. It is difficult to say whether this invention was due to importance of time-keeping in business or simply a product of a new sense of inquiry into the possibilities and practical uses of mechanical devices.

The soap-making was probably a Teutonic invention of The Middle Ages that became important in this period. The process consisted of decomposing animal or vegetable fats by boiling them with a strong alkali.

The iron industry developed as a result of two inventions-bellows driven by powerful water wheels and harnessing of water-power to work the hammers which forged iron into bar form. There were also important technological changes in brass manufacturing. Brass was produced by heating copper with charcoal and calamine, an oxide of zinc and was worked up by hammering, annealing (a heating process to soften the material) and wire drawing.

20.9 IMPACT ON SOCIEITY

The rise of modern science and the spirit of enquiry affected the society in many ways. Firstly, it went hand in hand with the emergence of a new and expanding community of professional scientists. The institutionalization of science linked members of this community in learned societies, common interests and shared values. Expansion of scientific knowledge was the primary goal of this community.

Secondly, the scientific revolution inaugurated the modern scientific method. This new method of acquiring knowledge about nature was highly critical, and based on experimentation and observation. It refused to base its results on the authority of traditions and sacred texts.

Thirdly, the scientific revolution did not affect the economic life and the living standards of masses to any great extent until the late eighteenth century. Although changes in navigational techniques facilitated overseas trade and enriched leading merchant houses, it had relatively few practical economic applications for the common men. The scientific revolution was, at this stage, more of an intellectual revolution. It created a new world-view of Enlightenment, which is often associated with the idea of modernity. This world-view, which played a significant role in the shaping of modern mind, was based on a rich amalgam of ideas. The idea of reason that applied the methods of natural science to understand all aspects of social life, however, was central to this intellectual revolution.

20.10 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have provided a brief survey of new advances and developments in the area of science and technology. These developments in many ways signal a transition from the medieval period. One of the important advancements in our knowledge was in the area of astronomy. The works of many astronomers and especially of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler presented new knowledge about the universe and celestial bodies. Their findings, based on keen observation and study of planets, challenged many of the myths and traditional ways of understanding the subject. Many of these new findings were criticized by the Church as they contradicted the religious explanations about the universe and its mechanism. We notice that now for the first time the experimental methods get established for explaining laws of nature. The science as a whole comes to occupy the space of tradition, rationality and logic tend to overtake traditional wisdom and methods of experiments get further refined. Institutionalization of science is one of the major achievements of this process of transformation.

Apart from Astronomy a number of scientific advances were made in the area of Physics, Mechanics, Chemistry and Life Sciences. The researches of Galileo and Newton were significant in the area of Physics. While the former involved the study of celestial bodies the latter formulated his laws of motion. The researches of Vesalius helped in a big way in understanding the human anatomy and diseases which affect the body. Scientists like Boyle, Priestley and Lovaisier helped in establishing the experimental methods in Chemistry.

The new scientific knowledge and methods led to the development of technological devices, improved instruments and tools and application of knowledge of one branch of science to others. The establishment of watermills and wind-mills provided new sources of energy. Improvement of navigational tools contributed in a big way in exploration of seas and long distance voyages. Printing technology completely transformed the method of communication and helped in the expansion of knowledge across regions and societies.

20.11 EXERCISES

1) What was the contribution of Copernicus in the field of astronomy?
2) How did Galileo contribute to the development of experimental method in science?
3) Give a brief account of major scientific developments. What do you understand by institutionalization of science?
4) Write in brief about major technological changes.
5) How did printing influence society?

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 21 RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

Structure

21.1 Introduction

21.2 Tradition of Church as an Institution

21.3 Disorder within the Church: Social Background of the Rise of Protestantism

21.4 Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism

    21.4.1 Intellectual and Formative Influences on Martin Luther
    21.4.2 Ninety-five Theses and Protestant Ideas
    21.4.3 Social Impact of Luther's Ideas
    21.4.4 Peasant Wars in Germany

21.5 Growth of the Protestantism

    21.5.1 "Magisterial" Reformation
    21.5.2 Calvinism
    21.5.3 Anglicanism or the English Reformation
    21.5.4 Anabaptists

21.6 Catholic Counter-Reformation

    21.6.1 Council of Trent
    21.6.2 New Religious Orders
    21.6.3 Inquisition

21.7 Protestantism and the Capitalist Ethic

21.8 Summary

21.9 Exercises

21.1 INTRODUCTION

By the medieval period the whole of Europe had adopted Christianity as its religion. By the 16th century it had spread to all those regions also where Europeans had settled through conquests or establishing trading centres. By the 16th century the Catholic Church emerged as a powerful institution in the Christian World in general and Europe in particular. No other contemporary religion in the world had such strong religious establishment.

Keeping this in view in this Unit we will focus mainly on the Christian religious establishment in Europe during 16th and 17th centuries. The period witnessed the rise of Protestant movement. The rise of Protestant movement was an event which had far reaching consequences for the Catholic religious establishment. In this Unit we will try to understand these factors which gave rise to Protestantism, its growth and Catholic Counter Reformation. We would also like to relate these religious changes to the process of increasing secularization, rise of absolutist monarchical states and nationalism. Moreover, we will also try to evaluate the economic significance of Protestantism especially its role in the rise of capitalism.

The Reformation or the division of European Catholic Church with the emergence of Protestant ideas was a decisive moment in the history of Europe. The religious reform of Church triggered important changes in the social and political atmosphere of the 16th and the 17th century Europe. The need for reform of the individual Christian and of the institution of Church was an important component in the Christian faith. The Church had undergone many changes by adapting itself to social political milieu for survival and expansion. The Christian humanists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century urged reform of the Church. The Reformation was also a more open and direct way of challenging the abuses of Catholic Church, the role of clergy or priesthood and the hierarchy within the ecclesiastical order. The consequences of religious division became more significant because it became intertwined with certain political and social factors. The close relation between the Protestant reformers and newly emergent nation states based on absolutist power also led to the growth of national or state Church, partial expropriation of Church property and separation of secular concerns of state from the control of Church. The expansion of literacy through medieval learning centres among the laymen and spread of ideas with modern printing provided the necessary stimulus for such a coincidence of religious and social changes.

21.2 TRADITION OF CHURCH AS AN INSTITUTION

Initially the term Church referred to the entire assembly of Jesus' followers. After the legalisation of Christianity by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century, and the growth of institutional offices and officials, the word Church was sometimes applied to those officials. Subsequently, the institutional basis of Church was strengthened when the bishops of Rome known as 'Popes' (from the Latin word Papa, meaning father) claimed to speak and act as the source of Christian unity. In 380 AD, the emperors were expected to gain the support of ecclesiastical organization of Church to maintain social harmony and order. The institutional strength of Church also grew as a friend of the empire. The emperor Theodosius allowed the Church to establish its own courts. Church courts began to develop their body of law, called "canon laws". These courts, not the Roman state, had jurisdiction over the clergy and ecclesiastical disputes. The foundation for the power of medieval Church was laid by these acts of monarchs. Even by the times of Theodosius Church had become so powerful that Bishop Ambrose of Milan refused to hand over his Cathedral Church to the emperor. Ambrose insisted that the Church was independent of state's jurisdiction and that in matters of faith or the Church, the bishops were to be judges of emperors, not the other way round. Ambrose's statement was to become the basis of relations between the temporal power of state and the spiritual power of the clergy.

The power and influence of Church kept on growing with the help of missionary activity and growth of monasteries as a main prop of continuous ecclesiastical reform during the Middle Ages. Church frequently became the source of social harmony and order in the times of turmoil and anarchy. The relations between the rulers and Church were not always harmonious. In eleventh century, Pope Gregory decreed against lay-investiture or selection and appointment of Church officials by secular rulers. Ecclesiastical opposition to such appointments was not new. It was accepted doctrine of Church for centuries. But Gregory's attempt to put this principle into actual practice was a radical departure from tradition. The German emperor Henry IV, the English monarch William and Philip I of France protested against Pope's decree. The conflict over the issue of lay- investiture had profound effect on social and political organization. It strengthened the great princes and aristocracy in Germany and prevented the development of a strong centralized monarchy. Such tension and controversies between rulers and church reveal that church was not entirely confined to religious or spiritual matters. In fact, the Catholic Church and its priesthood was the cornerstone of medieval social life in Europe. The religious ideology of Church was the predominant ideology. The Church imposed its will through a number of sanctions and maintained itself by a multitude of revenue and religious demands. It was the greatest property owner in Europe and accumulated unlimited wealth.

21.3 DISORDER WITHIN THE CHURCH: SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RISE OF PROTESTANTISM

The medieval Church was neither monolithic nor free from internal strife and tension. The Christianity and Church were used by the ruling classes to cement social-cohesion. The heretical sects threatened the social order. The term heresy (from Greek word hairesis) meant "individual choosing". In the Middle Ages, the term came to be applied to the position of a Christian who chose and stubbornly held to doctrinal error in defiance of Church hierarchy. The 'Waldensians' – the followers of heretic Peter Waldo of Lyons in twelfth century believed that only prayers, not sacraments, were needed for salvation. Another group known as the Cathars or Albigensians also rejected the hierarchical organisation and the sacraments of established Church. The Church used the support of equally popular saints Dominic and Francis, and the orders of friars that they established, to combat popular heresies. Unlike the earlier monastic order within Christianity such as the Benedictine and the Cistercians, the friars came from urban classes and were based in the cities and university towns. They based their life on the Gospel's teachings, owned no property and lived on mendicancy. The Papacy used these friars to staff a new ecclesiastical court, the Inquisition (1233). Inquisition means 'Investigation' and friars used unjust methods of psychological and physical torture in such investigations. The aim was to root out unorthodox thoughts.

The defiance of clerical hierarchy was reported from different parts of Europe. John Wycliffe (1329-84) in England and John Huss (1369-1415) in Bohemia demanded a reformed Church. Wycliffe wrote that papal claims of temporal power had no basis in scriptures. He also urged abolition of such practices as the veneration of saints, pilgrimages and pluralism. He urged that the Church be stripped of its property. His followers came to be called the 'Lollards'. Renaissance produced better educated theologians. It also strengthened humanism. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1468-1546) studied the Greek original text of the New Testament. His satire, The Praise of Folly (1511) condemned the absurd superstitions of the parish clergy and the excessive rituals of Christian monks. Although he remained within the Catholic spirit and stressed slow reform of Church to remove abuses and emphasized self-training for salvation. However, thinkers like Erasmus, Thomas More and Johann Reuchlin provided the much needed stimulus for the Protestantism of Luther.

In the early sixteenth century, criticism of established Church hierarchy also included clerical immorality, ignorance, pluralism or simultaneous holding of several *benefices* or offices and problem of absenteeism among higher clergy. Although priesthood demanded absolute celibacy, it was difficult to enforce it. Immorality, of course, included more than sexual transgressions. Many clerics, especially, higher ecclesiastical collected revenues from their *benefices* through local priest, even without visiting them. Many clerics of Italian origin, because of the papal domination, held multiple *benefices* or offices in England, Spain, France and Germany. It provoked nationalistic sentiments also. It was a time when absolutist monarchies were acquiring features of a national state such as a stable inner market and a national self consciousness. The institutional power of Church weakened as a result of these developments. These royal governments were already rewarding state officials with high Church offices in order to pay them, removing the distinction between secular offices and religious duties. The dissatisfaction of different classes and strata of society found expression in a negative attitude towards the Catholic clergy. The archbishops and high clergy were centres of power and wealth. They did not symbolize the Christian teaching of "give away what you have to the poor, and seek salvation". The Church services were conducted in a language incomprehensible to the laymen. These were some of the main ideological and sociological factors responsible for destruction of the spiritual or religious unity of the Western World in the sixteenth century.

21.4 MARTIN LUTHER AND THE BIRTH OF PROTESTANTISM

The Protestant revolt took place in Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Scotland, England and Bohemia and some parts of Hungary in the sixteenth century. A German Augustine monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546) was responsible for one form of Protestant Christianity, Lutheranism. Luther articulated the widespread desire for the reform of Church and a deep yearning for salvation. The concern for salvation was a chief motivation or force for religious reformers. In this sense, the sixteenth century Reformation was partially a continuation of the medieval religious search. In 1477, Pope permitted sale of indulgences for money, i.e., documents which absolved the sinner for his sins from punishment by torments in purgatory (not in hell.). This became the immediate cause of Protestant indignation.

21.4.1 Intellectual and Formative Influences on Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a product of the intellectual lives of the German Universities, which provided the milieu from which the Protestant Reformation emerged. He earned a master's degree from the University of Erfurt. His father intended his son to study law and enter a legal career – a stepping stone to public office and material success. However, Luther entered the monastery of Augustinian monks at Erfurt in 1505, became a priest in 1505 and obtained a doctorate egree in theology. From 1512 until his death in 1546, he served as a professor of scripture at the newly established university of Wittenberg. A well-known study of Luther's psychology by Eric Erikson suggests that Luther underwent a severe crisis and worried continually about salvation in the years 1505 to 1515. He had disobeyed his father, thus violating one of the Ten Commandments of the Christian faith. He was grappling with the problem of salvation and meaning of life. It was during this phase of identity crisis, that study of ancient saint Paul's letter, led Luther to a new understanding of Christian faith. He came to believe that salvation comes not through external observances and penances (the so called "good works" of the faithful) but through a simple faith in Christ.

Many aspects of Luther's theology did not mark a break with the early medieval and Augustine's ideas. But he was also influenced by the general humanistic milieu of German universities. Particularly, Luther was influenced by William of Occam's philosophy of nominalism. This philosophy believed that there is no corresponding reality either in or out of mind which our general terms and concepts could capture. Occam differentiated between the demonstrable truth which could be verified by experience and proved by reason, and the revealed truth which could be known only by faith. Martin Luther came to the conclusion that the gulf between reason and revelation could be bridged by faith alone. For him faith became a free gift from God's grace which would bring salvation and for this a correct understanding of scripture – the book of faith – was necessary.

21.4.2 Ninety-five Theses and Protestant Ideas

Pope Leo X wanted to continue the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica but was hard pressed for funds. A German archbishop Albert arranged money from the Fuggers, the wealthy banking house of Augsburg. In return for this money, Albert was given several *benefices* or offices in Church by papal dispensation. Archbishop Albert was also authorized to sell indulgences in Germany to repay the Fuggers. Wittenberg, where Martin Luther was a professor of theology, was in the political jurisdiction of Frederick of Saxony. Frederick was one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Empire but forbade the sale of indulgences within his duchy. Many people from Saxony went to other states to buy indulgences. This led to attachment of a list of ninety-five theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg Castle on the eve of All Saint's day (October31, 1517) by Martin Luther. What was an indulgence and why Luther opposed it? According to Catholic theology, Christians who sin alienate themselves from God's grace. In order to regain God's grace, the sinner must confess his or her sins to a priest and do the penance assigned. The doctrine of indulgence was indispensable part of this system of earthly (temporal) penance. It was believed that Jesus and the saints had accumulated an inexhaustible "treasury of merits". This could be dispensed by the Pope and the clergy for the lay Christians of insufficient merit and virtue. Initially an indulgence was a remission of temporal or priest-imposed penalties for sin. By the late Middle Ages it was widely believed that an indulgence secured total remission of penalties for sin on earth or in purgatory. It became a kind of spiritual insurance policy which could save from the fire of hell with an assured swift entry into the Kingdom of God.

Luther in his ninety-five theses denied the efficacy of 'good works' such as indulgences. He also challenged the Pope's power to grant indulgences. He advocated that the Gospel was the only divinely inspired basis of Christianity and faith is the only means of salvation. He, thus, rejected the role of clergy as the ordained administrators of sacraments. The theses were translated into German, printed and circulated throughout the empire. Luther insisted that there was no validity of indulgences and other so called good works in the scriptures. He thus raised the question of final authority within Church. The Papacy and the Catholic clergy tried to hit back and ex-communicate Luther in 1519. Luther responded by publicly burning the Bull (Papal edict) ex- communicating him. In the meanwhile, Luther had translated the old and New Testaments into German from the Hebrew and Greek original. These were also printed and circulated. On the basis of his studies, Luther denied the cult of Madonna and the saints and rejected monasticism.

Between 1520 and 1530, Luther worked out the basic theological tenets of his reformed Churches. The word Protestant derives from the protest drawn up by a small group of German princes at the Diet of Speyer in 1529 against the decision of the Catholic majority. At first Protestant was applied to Lutheran Churches but gradually it became a general term for many reformed non-Catholic sects of Christians in Europe. As Luther rejected ecclesiastical hierarchy, Church became the entire community of Christian believers. It was no longer to be identified with the clergy. Luther also argued that all vocations have equal merit, whether ecclesiastical or secular, and that every person should serve God in his or her individual calling. The seven sacraments of Catholic Church were reduced to three - baptism, marriage and communion. Luther articulated all his protestant ideas in three pamphlets. In "*An Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*," Luther appealed to the incipient nationalism of Emperor Charles V and other princes of Germany to resist Papal claims to spiritual supremacy and their sole monopoly of interpreting the scriptures. In his second pamphlet, "*A Prelude Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*", written in Latin, he addressed the clergy to reform the Churches. The third pamphlet, "*of the Liberty of a Christian Man*", emphasized the notion of faith and conscience and maintained that final authority rested in the word of God as revealed in the Bible. Protestantism, in sum, represented a reformulation of the Christian traditions of medieval times.

21.4.3 The Social Impact of Luther's Ideas

Luther's interests and motives were primarily religious, but many people responded to his ideas for diverse reasons. The city governments of German towns resented clerical privileges and immunities since the fifteenth century. The clergy was exempted from taxes and from civic responsibilities such as defense of the city. Yet Churches held large amount of urban property. City governments were determined to integrate the clergy into civic life by reducing their privileges. The prosperous burghers in many towns established preacherships. Luther's ideas attracted many better educated preachers in towns such as Stuttgart, Eisenach, Jena and Wittenberg. Educated middle class and professionals were also attracted by Luther's ideas. The printing presses rapidly reproduced and made known his ideas. Luther's incredible skill with language and his range of verbal expression proved a potent weapon too. Luther advocated a simpler, personal religion based on faith, the centrality of the scriptures in the liturgy and in Christian faith, abolition of elaborate ceremonials and sacraments, and end of ecclesiastical hierarchy. The humanists in northern Europe were also calling for precisely such reforms.

Protestantism also became a tool in the on-going political struggle in Germany and other parts of Europe. Rivalry and opposition to each other between emperors and the papal power already existed. The semi-sovereign feudal lords, who stood below the King, at times supported one faction and sometimes the other party. They strived for more and more independence. Many embraced Protestantism to gain independence. The anti-clericalism and incipient German nationalism coincided with the interest of German nobility. It demanded supremacy of secular government and state. Protestant ideas favoured such political arrangement. The imperial knights who had limited means also craved for vast material wealth and landed estates of Churches. However, the practice of religion in sixteenth century remained in public domain and not a private matter. In German states, the religion of ruling prince determined public religious tendencies and beliefs of his subjects. Princes did not believe in religious liberty. However many princes had a great deal to gain by embracing Protestantism. It could mean the legal confiscation of estates of clergy, monasteries, and wealthy shrines. Charles V, the Habsburg Emperor, was a vigorous defender of Catholic faith. Since a number of princes used religious issue to extend their financial and political independence, the resultant political struggle eroded imperial authority. In 1521, at the Diet of Worms, Charles V rejected Luther's doctrine and banned him from the empire. Luther and his ideas survived due to support of other sympathetic princes. It led to political fragmentation of the German empire. Charles's efforts to crush Lutheran states were unsuccessful. Finally, the peace of Augsburg (1555) allowed each prince to decide the religion of his territory. Most of the Northern and central Germany became Lutheran, while the south remained Roman Catholic.

The rise of Protestantism in Germany also led to many defections of monks from monasteries. As Luther attacked celibacy, many returned to married secular life. As the monasteries looked after schooling and maintenance of orphanages, etc, there was partial disruption of such services. It was felt that community should be responsible for such services. Gradually such a system did emerge. Although Lutheranism allowed priests and nuns to enjoy matrimony, it centred women's concern exclusively on the children, the Kitchen, and the Church. Luther believed that marriage and child-bearing was a woman's career. The Luther's ideas also indirectly stirred the German countryside that culminated in the peasant uprisings. We will discuss this in the next section.

21.4.4 Peasant Wars in Germany

The peasants were attracted to Lutheran ideas because it seemed to give religious support in their fight against economic grievances. The crop failures in 1523 and 1524 aggravated their deteriorating conditions. In 1525, the representatives of Swabian peasants drew up the twelve articles. They contained two basic themes:

a) Substitution of customary law by the laws of the God (or religion) and

b) Emphasis on the autonomy of village community.

These contained anti-clergy, anti-feudal connotations. Peasants demanded abolition of serfdom and other feudal restraints, resented seizure of common lands by nobles. They formulated their protest against the powerful and privileged nobility and clergy in religious terms. They believed that their justified demands conformed to the scripture and Lutheran ideas stimulated their unrest. God's righteousness and 'Word of God' were invoked by rebellious peasants of Swabia, Rhineland and Saxony. The peasant rebellions were poorly coordinated, with peasants plundering castles and monasteries in 1524-25 under the leadership of Thomas Munzer. Luther warned the peasants against uprisings and said that nothing justified the use of armed struggle against legally established authorities. Freedom of Christian men meant for Luther independence from the authority of the Roman Church, it did not mean opposition to 'divinely' ordered social order of nobles and their secular power. The peasant uprising was part of an endemic agrarian unrest and steadily disintegrating feudal order. The religious ideology was used as a means for legitimizing their revolt by the peasants. Luther completely distanced himself from the peasant revolt in his famous tract – "*Against the Murderous Thieving Hordes of the Peasants*." The Protestant nobility crushed the revolt ferociously killing thousands of peasants.

21.5 GROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM

The printing press gave publicity to Luther's ideas. Various social groups responded to them in their own ways. The Protestant spirit engulfed most of the northern Europe as it became associated with interests and aspirations that were not entirely theological. It led to profound changes in European life and society. We will trace the growth of some variants of Protestantism in the coming sections.

21.5.1 "Magisterial" Reformation

The anti-clergy feeling in Europe got crystallized broadly into two streams. One was of the radical reformers while the other was of influential moderate theologians like Huldreych Zwingli in Switzerland, Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and John Calvin of France. These moderate theologians used the services of secular state authorities in spreading their beliefs. They came to be known as 'magisterial' reformers because of reliance they placed on magistrates in furthering the independent divine mission of moral discipline through Church. In other words, they stressed the role of reformed church as an independent power standing side by side the secular state. The main instrument of reform used by these reformers was preaching. In Switzerland, especially Zurich, Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) played an active role in Reformation efforts. Monasteries were abolished and their wealth was used for humanitarian charity purposes by the city council. Zwingli, thus, favored a kind of fusion of secular and spiritual community.

The Reformation, though primarily due to religious schism, also grew due to symbiosis of moderate protestant reformers with the secular needs of the state. The exigencies of strong absolutist monarchies, relying on incipient nationalism, made it necessary for them to restrict the interference of Pope in their affairs. Such rulers tried to reduce papal control over ecclesiastical appointments, abolish church's monopoly over education and check the drain of resources in the form of *annates*, titles and sale of indulgences etc. to Rome.

21.5.2 Calvinism

John Calvin (1509-1564), born in north western France, embraced Protestantism in 1533 and was invited to assist in the reformation of city of Geneva in 1541. Calvin worked to establish a reformed Church and Christian community through city magistrates and reformed ministers. Calvin's ideas are embodied in *The Institutes of Christian Religion*. The basic element in his theology was his belief in the absolute sovereignty and omnipotence of God and total weakness of humanity. Calvin did not ascribe free will to human beings. He believed in the law of predestination – the eternal decree of God. It means that human beings cannot actively work through 'good works' for their salvation because God decided at the beginning of time who would achieve salvation and who would be damned. However, a person must lead a righteous life in the hope that he was pre-destined to achieve salvation. Calvin, with his complete mastery of scriptures and using preaching as an effective mode of communication, made Geneva as a model for many reformed Churches to emulate. Calvinist Church, however, did not provide religious freedom to all dissenters. It also dealt harshly with religious dissenters who defied strict religious dogmas of Calvinists. For instance, the Spanish humanist, Michael Servetus denied the Christian dogma of Trinity (Threefold divinity of god- the Father- Christ –the son and the holy spirit.) and rejected child baptism. He even declared that a person under twenty cannot commit a mortal sin. He escaped arrest by the Spanish Inquisition and came to Geneva. Calvin and the city council of Geneva got him rearrested and he was burnt at stake for his religious views.

However, Calvinism became a prominent force in Protestantism. The Calvinist ethic of the ‘calling’ dignified all work. It also provided Protestantism with a systematic theology and well-organized administrative machinery. Calvin’s theology and reformed Church influenced the French Protestants called Huguenots and Scottish Presbyterians. In France, spread of Calvinism, as the city bourgeoisie and power knights joined the ranks of Huguenots, led to the war of Religions (1562-1593). Many Huguenots were massacred at St. Bartholomew night on August 29, 1572. The Edict of Nantes (1598) provided limited liberty for the Huguenots. Abolition of Edict of Nantes by Catholic monarch Louis XV in 1685, led to huge exodus of Huguenots from France to England, Holland, Sweden and the New World or America. The Protestant doctrine of secular wealth as a divine gift which one should treasure and multiply also travelled with them. This subsequently resulted in the creation of entrenched European and North American capitalism.

John Knox, a passionate Calvinist preacher, tried to restructure the Scottish Church after the model of Calvin’s Geneva. In 1560 Knox persuaded the Scottish parliament to enact legislation ending papal authority. The mass was abolished and attendance at mass forbidden under penalty of death. The Church of Scotland came to be known as Presbyterian Church because presbyters or ministers- not bishops-governed it.

Calvin while upholding the sanctity of legitimate secular authority as a direct instrument of divine-will also gave a qualified support to rebellion against tyrannical absolute rule. The political implications of this meant that Calvinists tried to break the power of the Catholic and aristocratic minorities. It became the source of inspiration for the British and the North American Puritanism, and later influenced the growth of modern constitutional states. At another social level, Calvinism stressed high moral standards. It led to rigidity and intolerance in sexual relations.

21.5.3 Anglicanism or the English Reformation

The origin of Reformation in England can be traced to a number of social, economic and political causes. Demand for reform of the Church was voiced in the fourteenth century by the Lollards. Although suppressed, they survived in London, East Anglia, Kent and Southern England especially among the workers. Their anti-clergy ideals led to a personal, scriptural, non sacramental and lay- centred religion. The English humanists also stimulated such cries for reforms. The Reformation in England, however, was a state-initiated reform programme and got entangled in the growth of absolutist monarchy. Henry VIII took the initiative because of his matrimonial problems. Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catharine of Aragon so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. After the refusal of Pope to grant permission for divorce, Henry VIII declared himself the Head of English Church (1533-34). Properties of monasteries were appropriated and the ecclesiastical courts were abolished between 1535 to1540. In 1538, instructions were issued that Church services were to be compulsorily conducted in English instead of Latin. The English Reformation, however, was a gradual and piecemeal process as the majority of believers in England still clung to their Catholic faith. The Tudor state lacked the necessary bureaucratic and policing institutions to enforce religious changes. However, the religious reforms brought about profound changes in the English society. The assertion of supremacy of common law and abolition of ecclesiastical courts was welcomed by the lawyers. It also helped in the development of idea of national sovereignty above papal authority, and of parliamentarian jurisdiction above the ecclesiastical independence. The position of the Crown in the newly emerging nation-state improved. The status of parliament was enhanced as it played a key role in enforcement of Reformation through statutes enacted by it. The sale of Church property also consolidated the position of the upper landed aristocracy in English society. The position of power within state was earlier monopolized by clerics who were suitably rewarded out of Church benefices. Now the monarchy recruited its professional administrators from the University-educated sons of gentry.

21.5.4 Anabaptists

The name Anabaptist is derived from a Greek word meaning “to baptize again”. Anabaptists, the radical reformers, believed in adult baptism or entry into the Christian community, thus providing free choice about religious faith. They claimed that there was no scriptural basis for baptizing children and infants. They were opposed to ecclesiastical hierarchy and wanted to make the Church a voluntary association of believers who had experienced a spiritual illumination. They also wanted to separate Church and state. They emphasized religious tolerance and freedom. While the Protestantism grew with the help of princes and magistrates, the Anabaptists in sixteenth century sometimes refused to hold state offices, join armies or even take an oath. For them all believers were equal. The very nature of democratic congregational Church and egalitarianism appealed to lower classes of people, the peasants, artisans, miners and rootless mobile elements. The Anabaptists organized an uprising at Munster (1534-35), where they introduced their secular ideals. The princes of Germany along with the Protestant thinkers — Zwingli, Luther, Calvin as well as the Catholics all combined to track down and persecute these radical elements. However, traces of their ideas survived. Later the Quakers with their pacifism, the Baptists with their stress on inner spiritual awakening and the Congregationalists with their democratic Church organization represented the continuity with Anabaptist ideals.

21.6 CATHOLIC COUNTER - REFORMATION

The revival of Roman Catholicism, as a counter-reaction to spread of Protestantism has been called Counter-Reformation. The Counter-Reformation involved Catholic efforts to convince or coerce dissidents or heretics to return to the Church. However, it was not simply a negative reaction of Catholics. The feelings of medieval piety strengthened by a new spiritual fervor, Christian humanism, a revived scholasticism and administrative institutional reforms were some of the positive elements of Counter Reformation. Attempts to reform Catholic Church began in Spain and to some extent in the papal states of Italy. The Roman Catholic Church had developed a huge bureaucracy and an institutional reform of such huge machinery was naturally a very slow process. The preoccupation of Catholic Popes in political and financial affairs was also responsible for the tardiness of reform process. The idea of reform was closely linked to the idea of a general council representing the entire Christian community. Initially Popes were reluctant to convene such a council.

21.6.1 Council of Trent

Pope Paul III (1534-1549) established the Inquisition in the Papal States and called a council that met at Trent. The Council met intermittently between 1545 and 1563. Lutherans and Calvinists were also invited to participate with a view to reconciliation. However, their insistence that the scriptures be made the sole basis for deliberations made reconciliation impossible. Emperor Charles V and Henry II of France also did not allow their bishops to attend certain sessions. Some bishops also wanted a concrete statement asserting the supremacy of the council over the papacy. Despite these weaknesses, the Council of Trent provided momentum to Counter-Reformation. It gave equal validity to the scriptures and Catholic traditions. It reaffirmed the seven sacraments and Catholic notion of transubstantiation (the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist sacrament). The Council strengthened moral discipline among clergy and suppressed pluralism and sale of indulgences. It further stressed the need for a better-educated clergy, preaching and instructing the laity.

21.6.2 New Religious Orders

The establishment of new religious orders to raise the moral and educational standards of clergy and laity was a feature of Counter-Reformation. The Ursuline order of nuns founded by Angela Merici (1474-1540) attained enormous prestige for the education of women. The Ursulines sought to re-Christianize society by educating future wives and mothers. The Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), a former Spanish soldier, played important role in checking the spread of Protestantism and converting Asians and Latin Americans to Catholicism and spreading Christian education all over Europe. The goal of Jesuits, as the members of order were called, was reform of the Church through education. They also intended to teach the Gospel to pagan people. The Jesuits had a highly centralized, tightly knit organization. Emphasizing obedience, they created a modern, almost quasi-military institution and achieved phenomenal success. Jesuit schools adopted modern teaching methods. They carried Christianity to Asia and Latin America and brought southern Germany and much of Eastern Europe back to Catholicism.

21.6.3 Inquisition

The Inquisition was another powerful instrument of Counter-Reformation. In 1542, Pope Paul III established the sacred congregation of the Holy Office with jurisdiction over the Roman Inquisition. It was a committee of six cardinals empowered to arrest, imprison, and execute any Catholic who was found guilty of heresy. It operated according to the Roman law. It accepted flimsy evidence against the supposed heretic, was not obliged to inform the accused of charges against them, and sometimes applied torture. It published the *Index of*

Prohibited Books (1559), a list of books forbidden to be read by the Christians. Within Papal States, the Inquisition effectively put an end to heresy. Outside the papal territories, it made little difference. Similar medieval Inquisitions were also working in Spain since 1480 and the Netherlands (1523).

21.7 PROTESTANTISM AND THE CAPITALIST ETHIC

Protestantism is often credited with creation of a new ethic that encouraged capitalist development. It is claimed that the inherited medieval theology had hampered its growth. St. Jerome, the Compiler of Bible in Latin had declared in fourth century that “a rich man is either a thief or the son of a thief ” . This declaration in no way stood in the way of Church to amass wealth and landed estates. The Reformation censured the riches of Pope, the bishops and the monasteries, but at the same time, sanctioned the right of every man to the fruits of his labours and his moderate ways of life. Usury was discouraged and legally forbidden to Catholic Christians in the medieval societies. The new Protestant spirit allowed amassing of wealth from production and credit. The economic role of Calvinism and Protestantism in the rise of capitalist entrepreneurs has been the subject of a prolonged controversy among social scientists.

The German sociologist, Max Weber in his famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), initiated this controversy. He believed a particular cast of mind and ethic encouraged by Protestantism especially of Calvinist variety, strongly influenced the genesis of capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The concept of ‘calling’ in Protestant usage, treated worldly avocations as God created, and was to be fulfilled in the spirit of worship. This notion led to flourishing of entrepreneurship among the Dutch Calvinists, French Huguenots, Scottish businessmen and British capitalists. Weber traced the emergence of a pervasive capitalist profit-making ethos based on rational calculation and highly systematized pursuit of profit to changes in religious attitudes during Reformation. Others especially Marxist scholars point out the development of certain new business techniques such as cost-accounting by the economic elite and merchants during Renaissance - in the Catholic milieu. They also link the genesis of capitalism in Europe to far more wider economic and social changes such as demographic change in the form of population-increase, family structures, the continual rise in prices (The Price Revolution of 16th century with the increasing import of bullion from South America), the expansion of overseas commerce leading to diversification of production for export markets, etc. One thing is certain that centres of economic growth moved from Spain, Italy, Flanders and South Germany to Protestant England, Holland, Switzerland and to Baltic cities by the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was because many of merchants, bankers and finances whose life-style and attitudes were earlier tolerated were suddenly declared heretics by the Catholic Counter - Reformation and these entrepreneurs migrated to the centres in Northern Europe.

21.8 SUMMARY

The Protestant Reformation, as we have seen, was a culmination of a long process of religious change and attempts to purify Church from within. Martin Luther preached that all men and women were saved from their sins only by personal faith in Jesus Christ. The individual could reach God directly without the help of intermediary clergy. He thus broke the monopoly of clergy over medieval Europe's most precious treasure - eternal salvation. As Reformation gathered momentum, with peasant uprisings and social unrest, fuelled by radical Anabaptists, the reformed Protestant Churches resulted in a bureaucratization of Church as visible in Calvinist Churches. The Reformation, even if we don't agree with the Weberian proposition that it led to genesis of capitalist ethos, had a profound influence on the fate of newly emerging absolutist-monarchies and nation-states in Europe. It continued to influence relations of Church and state and diplomatic relations of various rulers. By questioning the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Roman papal curia, the Reformation did not immediately usher in secularization of social life, as it itself developed its own religious dogmas and allowed no real religious freedom, but in the long run it propelled society in that direction. Even the Catholic Church was compelled to transform itself under the pressure of Reformation. However, the parish Church as the focal point of religious devotion and social-life- remained woven into the fabric of village community. The Reformation initiated religious change affected bigger Churches and monasteries only.

21.9 EXERCISES

1) Explain the circumstances that gave birth to Protestantism.

2) Write a brief on Martin Luther and impact of his ideas.

3) Give a brief account of different variants of Protestantism.

4) Critically examine Weberian thesis that links Protestantism with the rise of Capitalism.

UNIT 22 URBANISM

Structure

22.1 Introduction

22.2 Urban Centres: Question of Definition

22.3 Towns Through the History

22.4 Urbanization in Medieval Period

22.5 Understanding Medieval Towns

22.6 Relations of Towns with the Countryside

22.7 Medieval Towns: Administration, Economy and Society

22.8 Summary

22.9 Exercises

22.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the ages urbanism and the towns have been associated and identified with the growth of civilization and recognized as hubs of cultural activities. In almost all the societies we have stories and tales about their towns having great splendour, wealth, magnificent palaces, aristocratic living, centres of intellectual life, abode of great literary geniuses and cauldroms of people from varying races and cultural background. In fact many societies were known by their splendid towns rather than other attributes. During medieval period all parts of the world underwent a rapid phase of urbanization and witnessed a proliferation of towns. They acquired their specific characteristics and were seen as quite different from the rural areas or countryside. They had their own dynamism and symbolized onward march of various societies towards growth and progress, also as the lands of opportunities for the people with skills and talent. For peasants and serfs oppressed by rural subjugation towns were a ray of hope for severing their feudal ties, a land of opportunity for economic and social success, where they could hope to achieve their due share of wealth.

The process of Urbanism and the growth of towns and cities are to be seen in the perspective of growth of civilizations and in the medieval period as the centres and instruments of transition to modern period. In this Unit, we will discuss the emergence of towns and the role they played in human societies both ancient and medieval. Our focus would be more on the medieval towns. In terms of regions we will cover urban centres in Europe, Arab World and India. We will also discuss the layout of towns, their economic role, the social classes and the relationship of towns with the rural hinterland.

Let us begin with an attempt to provide a definition of towns.

22.2 URBAN CENTRES: QUESTION OF DEFINITION

Since 1960s we see a veritable explosion of research about the phenomenon of urbanism and in particular on the history of towns. These researches have

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

provided a lot of insight in understanding the process of urbanization in medieval period in general in Europe and specifically in France and Great Britain. In India also a number of researches have brought to light a lot of material on urban history.

It is very difficult to define a town on the basis of extent of area under habitation or large size of population or any one particular function because there is a lot of variations in size, population or the background of its rise and the nature of functions it performed. However, broadly speaking, the town generally was a human settlement bigger in area than a village (in general not always), having developed crafts, established markets and an administrative set up which was different from a rural settlement. Major segment of its population was engaged in professions other than agriculture and was dependent for its food supply and provisions on its hinterland of villages.

In different historical and geographical contexts a town or a city has many facets just as society has many complex facets of individuals. The town is not merely a diachronic assemblage of buildings. It has a structure and is a centre of different kind of social and economic relations. The characteristics of a city are formed by these socio-economic relations. They originated and were shaped by such relations.

We need to know that the modern cities like London, New York, Bombay and Beijing are not like medieval cities –Venice, Paris, London, Surat and Agra etc. and the medieval towns were not like ancient cities –Athens, Rome, Alexandria, Patliputra, Kashi etc. All these cities and towns were and are different in space, time and formations. As students of urban history, we must understand that the word 'town' or 'city', as a conceptual entity, has been changing over times. Despite these differences in time and space, urban social formations, of whatever type, served certain social and economic purposes at a given point of time. Functionally, the urban areas may be classified into administrative, religious, military, commercial and cultural centres. Any particular city may fulfil any one of these functions or any combination thereof. Needless to say, such a classification simply emphasizes the origin of a particular town, therefore, such classification should not be treated as water tight since many towns, once established, performed a variety of functions simultaneously. Nonetheless, this classification at least reflects the stress on the most pronounced character of a particular town in the process of its emergence and growth. At any rate, the sustenance and growth of a town depended largely on the multifarious activities it could perform in the long run.

A town is certainly a part of some realities and processes, certain repeated and regular characteristics. In most of the times, division of labour was one of the dominant features of a town. Market is an integral part of the town and no regional or national markets can be without the towns. The inhabitants of the city or town always get their food supply and other items of consumption through the market, the town in other words generalizes the market into a widespread phenomenon. Moreover the market provides the imperative dividing-line running through the middle of societies and economics. "Wherever there are towns", F. Braudel, points out, "there will be a form of power, protective and coercive, whatever the shape taken by that power or the social group identified with it. And while power may exist independently of towns, it acquires through them an extra dimension, a different field of application. Last of all, there can be no door to the rest of the world, no international trade without towns."(F. Braudel, p. 481)

Our attempt of defining a town in this section must have given an impression that all towns irrespective of time and space were the same, but all towns are not alike. But all of them had some basic features. All of them had a continuous dialogue with their rural surroundings, a prime necessity of everyday life; the supply of provisions and manpower. Most of them were located at the center of communications networks large and small. They had certain kind of relationships with their suburbs and with other cities and towns. Some towns were dominant, others subordinate. All were related to each other forming a sort of hierarchy. They all had a social and cultural ethos peculiar to society they existing in.

22.3 TOWNS THROUGH THE HISTORY

Urbanization in Greek and Roman Civilization was an important economic and cultural aspect of the ancient society. Towns had prospered and proliferated in the Greeco-Roman world. The towns were open to the surrounding countryside and were on terms of equality with it. Athens accepted inside its walls as rightful citizens the Eupatrid horse-breeders as well as the vine-growing peasants. The peasant regularly attended the Assembly of people in towns and participated in deliberations among his equals. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, the entire population of the Attic countryside evacuated itself to Athens where it took refuge while the Spartans ravaged the fields, olive groves and houses. When the Spartans fell back at the approach of winter, the country people returned to their homes. The Greek city was in fact the sum of the town and its surrounding countryside. And this was the case because the towns had only just come into existence, only recently emerged from the rural background.

In Roman civilization the patricians were concentrated in the city of Rome or in the principal Italian towns. The big landowners were absentee landlords who resided in Rome or in prominent urban centres. Their wealth followed into these cities. Mediterranean sea was a geographical centre of the Roman trade and all major towns were located on the coastline. Roman trade was boosted through the Mediterranean sea because it was unified during the Roman empire. Ostia was an important port town situated near Rome at the mouth of the Tiber. Ostia developed into a major port with traffic from all over the Mediterranean converging upon it. Paris, Trier and Mainz were a few notable frontier towns which had grown out of military garrison.

As soon as the latifundists withdrew to the countryside, the realization of Western part of Roman Empire began and the rural centres of this part declined. This did not happen in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Towns and some amount of trade survived in this region of the empire. The three biggest cities of Roman Empire were Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Of these two were situated in the east-Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria. Alexandria was perhaps the greatest port of the Greco-Roman world, surpassing even Ostia in terms of its economic importance. Both Alexandria and Antioch continued to prosper for long after the decline of Rome. Another important city of this region was Constantinople the capital of Roman Empire of the East. It had become prominent in the fourth century A.D.

In South Asia, the earliest known civilization was essentially urban. The towns of Mohanjodaro and Harappa seem to have planned urban settlements with a layout superior to many a medieval townships in the region. After a long gap we again come across emergence of towns of substantial size around the 6th century BC. From 600 BC – 500 A.D. the genesis and growth of towns was not uniform in Ancient India and this gave them diverse features. Some grew as political and administrative centres. Many of them were the seats of power or capitals of kingdoms, such as Rajagriha in Magadha, Shravasti in Kosala, Kaushambi in Vatsa, Champa in Anga and Ahichatra in Panchala. Few grew at trade routes such as Ujjain and few were sacred centres as Vaishali and Kashi. Excavation at sites such as Vaishali, Ujjain, Shravasti, Rajghat and Rajagriha date urban beginning to the mid of first millennium BC.

The towns of this era were enclosed by a moat or rampart and were sometimes fortified. Since many towns were located on river banks the rampart would have been a protection against flood, as well as providing a minimal defence against attacks and raids. The houses were better built and, in the later stages, were of mud brick with some limited use of baked bricks. Drains, ring wells and soakage pits were better built than the Harappan cities. Houses at Bhur Mound (Taxila) consisted of rooms built round a courtyard, and this was the prototype house-plan for many towns in India.

Literary sources explain rise of early urbanization in two ways. Few villages were as the village of blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, weavers, basket-weavers and so on. Such villages were situated near the sources of raw material and linked to routes and markets. Specialized craftsmen tended to congregate because this facilitated access to resources and distributions of the craft production. Such places could evolve into a town and towns in turn expanded their production and their markets to become commercial centres. Vaishali, Shravasti, Champa, Kashi and Kaushambi were such market centres in the Gangetic plain. But Ujjain, Taxila and Bharukaccha (Baruch) had wider geographical and economic reach.

Hierarchy of settlements was a symbol of urbanization. The *grama* (village) was the smallest unit of settlement. Places were known as *nigama* and as *Pataligrama*, and *Shringaverapura*, were the centres of exchange. *Nagars* were small towns and *mahanagars* were bigger and prosperous towns.

In later Gupta period there was decay in urban centres in Ancient India because of the emergence of feudal features. During this period (after 500 A.D.) the towns not only declined, but many suffered a visible termination of commerce. Maritime trade continued in the peninsular region but at a much reduced scale. The Hun invasion of the Roman Empire would have disturbed the commercial circuits, not only in the areas beyond north-western India but in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. All these developments were responsible for the urban decline in northern-Ancient India.

Towns of Arab and Islamic World

Towns were of prime importance in Islam: Prophet Muhammad lived and propagated his message in the urban centre of Mecca. In those days Mecca was a prosperous town of Arab World. It had caravan links with distant, foreign cities, and was an important centre of large-scale trade. At all events, the approval to trade as a profession indicate the important position urbanism occupied. The centres of faith, in those days of Islam, were located mostly in the towns, in a way that recalls the beginnings of the Christian church in the West.

Trade-routes were of great significance for the Islamic world and its civilization. For centuries, Arabs occupied dominant positions due to these trade-routes. For substantially long period Sudanese gold and black slaves were exported by Arabs to the Mediterranean countries. Silk, pepper, spices and pearls were also exported to Europe by the Arabs from South Asia. In Asia and Africa, it controlled trade with the Levant. Only from Alexandria, Aleppo, Beirut and Tripoli did Italian merchants take over. Islam was therefore above all a civilization based on movement and transit. This meant long sea voyages and multiple caravan routes between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, from Black Sea to China and India, and to North Africa.

Long sea voyages, multiple caravans and long trade-routes were not feasible without sizable towns. The towns flourished in Islam, and were the motors which made possible the circulation of people, money and goods. Everything passed through the network of towns, merchandise, pack animals, people and rare acquisitions. Its cultural and intellectual world was located in towns. Even India experienced substantial urban expansion under the Sultanate and subsequently during the Mughal rule.

Towns had prospered and proliferated in the Greco-Roman World, but the decline of the empire brought with it their ruin. Only such urban centres survived, whose role was simply that of headquarters of religious and military administrations.

In the seventh century, the Mediterranean world was split in two, and the impoverished European half tied itself more closely to the northern part of the subcontinent. Under the aegies of a common religious creed, Europe emerged in embryo. It was a poor and primitive Europe, a Europe made up of numberless rural microcosms the feudal estates, largely self-sufficient, whose autarchy was in past the consequences of the decline of trade and to a large extent its cause as well.

22.4 URBANIZATION IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

During the medieval period there is a revival of urbanism in most of the regions. The proliferation of urban centres is most remarkable in Europe and Asia. The most significant aspect of the medieval towns is the continuity of the settlements at particular sites and their gradual growth in terms of number of inhabitants, the area of its spread, institutions of towns, the craft production and commercial activities. The medieval towns played a key role in the transition of medieval societies into the modern world. This is most evident in case of Europe where the towns heralded the industrial revolution and became centres of communication network.

The emergence of towns in the later medieval Europe is matter of some controversy. It has been suggested by few historians that medieval town was survivals of older Roman cities. But it is true that one or two of the larger towns probably maintained some continuity of institutions throughout the period of nomadic devastations. But this theory of continuity seems manifestly inadequate. As we have already pointed out that the most of the Roman towns had disappeared in the Dark Ages and the institutions and the modes of life of Roman style completely discontinued in the early medieval age.

It is generally believed that in the Western Europe the growth of trade and markets prepared the ground for the growth of such forces which weakened and supplant feudalism. The process can largely be identified with the rise of towns in 11th – 14th centuries. Since the rise of urban centres was linked to the decay of feudalism in Europe. Few historians argue that the towns of this period had a purely rural origin. According to this argument, the towns grew up within the structure of feudal society, its inhabitants retained certain relationships of dependence to an overlord; and qualification for citizenship remained essentially agricultural trade became main occupation of the inhabitants only at a later stage. The only dividing line between earlier village and later town was in the fortification of the place at certain date with a wall for the protection of its inhabitants.

Henery Pirenne gives a different argument for origin of medieval towns. He pointed out that towns originated in settlements of merchants' caravans. Traders, at first were itinerant peddlers travelling between the various fairs or from one feudal household to another often in caravans for mutual protection. They were like the hawkers and peddlers of the present day. For settlement they might select the site of an old Roman town, by reason of its favourable situation at the junction of Roman roads, or they might choose the protecting walls of some feudal castles. Such settlements were also being protected by the kings and knights on some money-payment. At some state of these developments the loose association of caravan days probably assumed the more formal dignity of guild. The guild tended to claim not only immunity from feudal jurisdiction but also a measure of control over local trade.

Few English towns originated on a ford or near the estuary of a river which caused them to become centres of trade. Manchester grew out of a village and seems to have remained consistently agricultural and non-commercial in character for some time even after it had secured the status of a borough. Cambridge apparently emerged from a group of villages and was situated close to an older castle and camp, but its position on a ford was no doubt responsible for its later growth, same was the case also with Oxford.

Pirenne also gives another reason for the survival of towns after their decline between the eight and the tenth centuries. According to him, the governing factor was the resurgence of maritime commerce in the Mediterranean, with its consequent stimulus to the movement of transcontinental trading carvans, and in turn to local settlements of traders. The seaborne trade had been earlier interrupted by the Islamic invasions; but in the eleventh century the old trade route was opened with the east. The Crusades of 11th – 12th centuries created favourable conditions for the emergence of commerce and trade in the Mediterranean sea. In this way a revival of Mediterranean commerce played an important role in reviving transcontinental trade and hence urban life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

It is quite difficult to find out extent of urbanization or work out the ratio of urban inhabitants in the total population of medieval period. Another important point which lacks any consensus is the size of a town. Can one fix a minimum limit to the number of inhabitants to classify a habitat as a town or city. Both the issues have been matters of debate among the scholars.

We have references to towns in Europe whose population estimates vary from a few hundred to couple of hundred thousands. While in France the official figures considered a minimum population of 2000 to be counted as a town. While in England a population of 5000 was more acceptable. According to Braudel (*Structures of Everyday Life*, pp 483-84) if 5000 is taken as minimum definition around 13% population lived in towns in England in 1700, 16% in 1750 and 25% in 1801. If 400 was to be taken as a figure then 10% was living in 1500 and 25% in 1700. Braudel has given some other estimates such as Germany – 10% in 1500 and around the same for America in 1700; Japan in 1750 around 22%; the highest was perhaps in Holland 51% in 1515, 59% in 1627, 65% in 1797; the lowest in Russia around 2.5% in 1630, 3% in 1724 and 4% in 1796. In case of India in around 1593 it is mentioned that there are around 120 big cities and 3200 small towns or qasbas (Nizamuddin Ahmad, Tabqat I Akbari). Irfan Habib estimates that around 15% of the total population in Mughal India lived in towns. It indicates a high degree of urbanisation in late 16th and 17th centuries. In Islamic World towns like Mecca, Jeddah, Baghdad and Cairo were known as large centres of splendour and wealth. Ibn Battuta (14th century) refers to Cairo as having 1200 water carriers. The level of urbanisation in China was also substantial Braudel points out well defined hierarchies of towns for which suffix *fu*, *chu* and *hien* was used to indicate the descending size of towns. There were in addition the 4th category of elementary towns.

The growth of towns in Europe was remarkable. We have population estimates of more than fifty towns in 16th - 17th centuries which had a population of more than 40000 inhabitants (Annexure -1). Out of these around 12 towns had a population of more than a hundred thousand and 3 towns had a population of more than 4 hundred thousand around the end of 17th century. The town of London which had a population of less than 60,000 in early 16th century grew to around 2 hundred thousand around the early 17th century and crossed 4 hundred thousand by the end of the century. In 17th century India, it is estimated that seven towns had a population exceeding a hundred thousand. Cities like Lahore, Agra and Delhi are estimated to have more than five hundred thousand inhabitants which is more than any contemporary European city.

22.5 UNDERSTANDING MEDIEVAL TOWNS

The towns through the history represented a different economic, political, social and cultural environment than the countryside or rural areas. Here we will discuss the features that gave pre-modern towns of Europe and Asia a distinct identity

The towns of Asia and Europe were certainly different from each other in their physical and socio-economic appearances in medieval age, we therefore will discuss them separately.

Europe

West European towns were based on their corporate, communal organization as a capitalist nucleus with the capacity to act as the solvent of feudal social relations. Thus capitalism and towns were basically the same thing in the west. The European towns' corporate autonomy and the relative openness of their communal structure allowed them to develop as autonomous world according to their own propensities. According to Pirenne's enormously influential studies of medieval towns and commerce, the closing of the Mediterranean trade routes was the key to the substitution of an agrarian economy in the 7th - 9th centuries: “for an economy of change was substituted by an economy of consumption. Each demesne constituted from this time on a little world of its own – a closed domestic economy – of no markets. They did not sell, because markets were wanting. Conversely, the reopening of long distance trade from the 11th century the counter-attack of Christianity against Islam-revived towns and markets (Italy, Flanders) and broke down the rigid confines of demesnial system. As in antiquity the country oriented itself afresh on the city. But in this case the division of labour between town and country transformed the countryside; by arousing his desires the city multiplied the peasant’s needs, raised his standard of living and so caused the end of serfdom, which coincided with the increasing importance of liquid capital, urban trade drew agricultural production towards the towns, modernized it and set it free. While the Burgher’s own conception of freedom was still that of a privileged order, a corporate monopoly, nonetheless to the middle class was reserved the mission of spreading the idea of liberty far and wide and of becoming, without having consciously desired to be, the means of gradual enfranchisement of the rural classes … It had not the power to arrest an evolution of which it was the cause and which it could not suppress save itself vanishing.” (Rodney Hilton, pp. 172-73) In this way the market was the only dynamic force, the principle behind all movement, all change.

Different towns possessed economic and political independence in varying degress. The influence of their presence as trading centers, especially on the smaller estates of the knights, was a profound one. This gave impetus to the money economy. The exploitative rural exactions by the lords forced the rural population to migrate from manors to towns in the declining phase of the feudal system. One must remember that many towns of this period were scarcely larger than what we should call large villages to-day. It was rare for a town to exceed 20,000 inhabitants; and in the fourteenth century cities as large as 40,000-50,000 habitants were only found in Italy and Flanders. York only had some 11,000 and Bristol 9,500 inhabitants. Even in the fifteenth century Hamburg only had some 22000. Nuremberg 20,000- 25000, Ulam 20,000 and Augsburg 18,000. The urban communities of craftsmen, merchants and small traders in their early stage had dependence on feudal economy. The mode of production of urban handicrafts was also a form of simple commodity production.

Asia

Medieval towns in Asia were somewhat different from European towns. While towns of Europe managed to secure autonomy it was not so in case of towns of Islamic world. Towns in Islamic world could manage some kind of autonomy once the empires collapsed. Some towns here developed distinct character and limited autonomy. But they lasted for a short while and the main beneficiaries were only certain marginal towns like Cordoba, or the cities which were urban republics by the fifteenth century, like Ceuta before the Portuguese occupation in 1415, or Oran before the Spanish occupation in 1509. The usual pattern was the huge city under rule of Caliph: a Baghdad or Cairo. Islamic towns had neither the political liberties nor the sense of architectural order that western cities strove for once they were sufficiently developed. But the Islamic towns had all the genuine elements of town life: a growing body of traders, merchants and intelligentsia, plus a mass of poorer people, artisans and daily wage earners. They enjoyed pleasures of city life and were less constrained than elsewhere. Towns in this part were also centres of education, with their schools attached to the mosques, their madrasas, and their institutions of higher learning. They were centres of attraction for people from the surrounding rural areas, whom they employed and engaged as per the requirements and needs of towns. Islamic world towns had a very firm grip on the highly primitive peasantry outside the gates. Damascus controlled the peasants near the Ghouta and the mountain people of Jebel ed Druze; Algiers controlled the corsairs and the peasants of the Fahs, the Mitija and the Kabyle Mountains.

At one level these are the characteristics of all towns, Muslim and Western alike. What distinguished the Muslim towns, essentially, were their early growth and their exceptional size. The towns were the essence of Islamic civilization. Towns, roads, ships, caravans and pilgrimages were all the part of a single whole, all as Louis Mussigron has aptly said, elements of movement, all 'lines of force' in Muslim life.

In medieval India the cities and towns had to fulfil diverse and overlapping roles. Many of them were the centres of manufacturing and marketing, banking and entrepreneurial activities. They were connected by sea and land routes to the cities of West, East and Central Asia. Smaller urban centres performed a more modest role in relation to local commerce, local resources and local consumer needs. In Mughal period many European travellers visited different cities of India and described the activity and prosperity of these urban centres in their travelogues. The cities of Mughal period were not only the centres of commerce and trade, some big cities had become prosperous because they became centres of political and administrative activities Delhi and Agra were capital cities of the empire, Patna, Burhanpur, Dacca Khandesh, Vijayanagar, Lahore, Thatta, etc. were regionally important cities and most of them were provincial capitals of administration. Benaras, Nasik and Ajmer were pilgrimage and sacred centres of the Medieval India. These cities of Mughal empire were the repositories of higher culture and learning and they were also the symbol of Samskirtic and Indo-Islamic 'Great Traditions' and through them these traditions could be transmitted to society as a whole.

But the towns of India and China were incapable of taking over the artisanal trades from the countryside. They were both the open towns and subject towns simultaneously. Besides, in India as in China already existing social structures hampered the free movement to the towns.

Physical Layout of Towns

We have a lot of evidence to suggest that medieval towns in all parts of Europe and Asia were enclosed by walls with ramparts. Towns in Europe, China, India and the Islamic World had slightly different heights and size of walls depending on the perception of threat or need for protection. The need for wall was to define the boundaries of the town and provide protection not only from outside attack but also from undesirable intruders and trespassers. The only exceptions where protective wall was not erected were some island towns, Japanese archipelago or towns like Venice (surrounded by water). A number of gates were built at places to provide an access to the city and regulate the entry of visitors. In almost all the cases the gates were placed under the guards by the administration.

In many cases different parts of the town were clearly divided into areas for residential purpose, for market, government offices and courts etc. In most of early European cities the plans were not clearly marked and growth unplanned. Because of the periodic growth and migrations the requirements of residential and business areas kept increasing and towns expanding from a given point. The over-crowding in all large cities resulted in narrow streets, small dwellings and constantly widening boundaries. In many cities one can trace old city walls and its subsequent expansion which again had a wall. Generally the centre of the city was hub of activities for business and official establishments. The craftsmen and producers were often at the periphery of towns.

The towns of Islamic world had a lot of similarity. The streets of Islamic towns were narrow and generally sloping, so as to be washed automatically by the rain. A saying of the Prophet prescribed that streets should be seven cubits wide (between ten and thirteen feet), permitting two laden asses to pass each other. Towns like Cairo, Mecca and its port Jedda had multi-storey buildings. The administration of a town was not run by the municipality or any elected body, but by the officials of the king. Important part of the town was built in a planned manner. At the centre of the town was the Great Mosque for the weekly sermon. Nearby was the bazaar, i.e. the merchants' quarter with its streets of shops and its caravanserai's or warehouses, as well as the public baths. Artisans and shops were grouped in some sort of order starting from the Great Mosque, first, the makers and sellers of perfumes and incense, then the shops selling fabrics, the jewellers and food stores, and finally the humblest trades-curriers, cobblers, blacksmiths, potters, dyres. Their shops marked the edges of towns. In principles, each of these trades had its location fixed for all times. Prince's quarter was in principle located on the outskirts of the city, well away from riots or popular revolts. The towns were often confined within walls with grandiose gateways, and surrounded by huge cemeteries.

In case of India most of the towns were enclosed with protective walls and guarded gates. There were separate markets for specific commodities like grain, cloth, iron objects etc. However in many towns such divisions were not neat and shops were to be found on both sides of the main road. Shopkeepers would live above or behind the shops. Many a residential areas had professional or caste groups residing in sub areas separately. The areas drew their names from the dominant groups of inhabitants. Another significant feature of these towns was the presence of sarais (resting and living places) for travellers and businessmen.

22.6 RELATIONS OF TOWNS WITH THE COUNTRYSIDE

The town and countryside had a reciprocal relationship – one supplementing and complimenting the other and following the rules of co-existence.

In reality town and countryside were never separate like oil and water. They separated for some time and again joined. Even in Islamic countries the town cannot ignore or exclude the countryside, despite the apparently sharp divide between the two. A similar pattern of town development was followed in China where the countryside was fertilized with refuse and rubbish from the town.

In fact the town was always dependent for its food supply on the countryside in immediate vicinity. It could have recourse to long-distance trade only in exceptional circumstances and only if it was a privileged city like Florence, Venice, Naples, Rome, Peking, Istanbul, Delhi and Mecca.

Many big towns had their share of rural activities up to the eighteenth century. Shepherds, gamekeepers, agricultural workers and vine-growers had their house even in Paris. Every town generally owned surrounding area of gardens, fields and orchards inside and outside its walls.

Innumerable small towns of Europe and *qusbas* of north India were the same as the big villages. They had some characteristics of the countryside. The term 'rural town' was used for them. All the same, Weinsberg, Heilbronn, Stuttgart and Esslinzen in vine growing lower Swabia took it upon themselves to send the wine they produced to the Danube and wine was an industry in itself.

During the harvesting season many inhabitants of the town left their residence, particularly artisans and urban labourers to go to their villages for harvesting. It was true of England, even on the eve of industrial revolution; and of Florence where very important harvesting work was to be undertaken chiefly in winter in the sixteenth century.

Things were the same in 1772, when a treatise on economy deplores the fact that instead of peasants, artisans were concerning themselves with agriculture in the small towns and princedoms in Germany. It would be better if everyone kept in his own station. Towns would be cleaner and healthier if they were cleared of livestock and their piles of dung. The solution would be to ban all farming in the towns, and to put it in the hands of those suited for it. Craftsmen would be able to sell goods to peasants, peasants would be sure of selling the regular equivalent to townspeople, and everyone would be better off.

The Indian villages were to some extent self-sufficient, but the village community had a relationship with the towns. The villagers had to sell their products in the town markets and *qusbas* for money and they had to purchase iron tools, salt and spices from the markets of the town. Many village artisans gave up their villages for settling in the towns. Most of the landlords and *jagirdars* were staying in the towns and *qasbas* which were surrounded by the countryside. In China, the country craftsman supplemented his hard life by work in silk or cotton. His low standard of living made him a formidable competitor for the town craftsman. An English traveller (1793) registered surprise and delight at the unwanted sight of peasant women near Peking breeding silk worms and spinning cotton, "which is in general use for both sexes of the people, but the women are almost the sole weavers throughout the Empire".

The towns and countryside not only had reciprocal relationships with each other, they had also contradictory relationships. The medieval urban society grew and developed in sharp contrast to the surrounding countryside. This phenomenon has been already pointed out in this Unit. The walls of the town had a practical purpose but also a symbolic significance; they represented the boundary between two cultures in conflict. It was this conflict which gave to the medieval city its definite character and made the urban movement of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries the turning point of world history.

22.7 MEDIEVAL TOWNS: ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

The rapid urbanism during the medieval period had a big impact on the administration, economy and society. The changes in both these spheres had long term consequences and to certain extent led the way to the transition to the

Modern World. Here we will give a brief account of the impact of rise of towns in a few select areas only.

The peasant who left his village and arrived in the town was immediately other man. Although he had left hated feudalism to become a freeman but this mattered little. If the town adopted him, he could go back to his lord when his lord called for him. Though it was obsolete elsewhere, such calls were still frequently to be heard in Silesia in the eighteenth century and in Moscow up to the nineteenth.

Although the towns of medieval Europe were more open, but only the rich of the cities had citizen rights in Europe. The nobles of Venice remained a closed class for centuries. There were two categories of citizens – full citizens and ordinary citizens in Venice. Fifteen years of residence were still required to be allowed to apply for the first, twenty five years for the second. A decree by the senate of Venice in 1386 even forbade new citizens from trading directly in Venice with German merchants. The ordinary towns people were also hostile to newcomers. In June 1520, the street people attacked the peasants who had arrived from the main land as recruits for the army, crying 'Back to plough, shirkers!'.

Venice was an extreme example, because its aristocracy and constitution were extremely reactionary. But the limited conception of citizenship was everywhere in existence.

The industry and craft, privileges and profits, in fact, belonged to the town, to its authorities and to its merchant entrepreneurs. The guild of merchants could deprive the rural areas of the city of the right to spin, weave and dye, or if on the contrary it would be advantageous to grant it these rights. Everything was possible in these interchanges, as the history of each individual town shows.

As we have earlier pointed out the guilds of merchants (oligarchy of merchants had complete control over the administration and trade of the town. And the city of London was a telling example of guilds' domination even in eighteenth century. If Westminster and suburbs of London were growing continually, noted an economist (1754), it was for obvious reason, "These suburbs are free and present a clear field for every industrious citizen, while in its bosom London nourishes ninety-two of all sorts of those exclusive companies (guilds), whose numerous members can be seen adorning the Lord Mayor's show every year with immoderate pomp."

After a prolonged struggle which was fought between the town communities and feudal lords in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Western Europe, the towns of medieval Europe succeeded in achieving autonomy from the feudal authority. In 1327 at Burg (England) the townsmen made forcible entry into the monastery and carried off the Abbot and monks to imprisonment until they allowed the grant of a guild merchant – In the same year at Abingdon (England) a crowd, swollen by allies from Oxford, laid siege to the abbey and burned down its gates. The great Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England was actively supported by the urban elements. Through such struggles, the towns of Europe particularly of England acquired partial or complete autonomy from the feudal domination.

In large cities of medieval Europe merchant community was a dominant one, but there were a number of older aristocratic families who were owners of land in the city and its neighbourhood. These represented an element of feudal society that continued to survive inside the new urban society. In many Italian cities these feudal families did not only control the urban government, but also dominated the neighbouring countryside. With the support of the countryside, they converted the urban centre into feudal-commercial republics. In the twelfth century, the five aristocratic families controlled Genoese trade.

In some English towns we find superior and inferior categories of burghers at an early date. At many towns of England – Winchester, Huntingdon, Norwich and Derby the poor burghers who dwelt outside the walls were evidently treated as being of inferior status. Prior to the fourteenth century the social inequalities were not very sharp in England. Big traders, merchants, craftsmen and retail trader all were members of Merchant Guild – an association of urban traders and craftsmen. Among the craftsmen there would have been little differentiation between master and journeymen in economic and social terms. The journeymen did work with his master in the workshop and often ate at latter's table. He was like a companion-worker and it was impossible to find any distinction of status between a trader, a master and journeymen in the early guilds. The differentiation in most cases inside the urban community was very little. In the course of time, as the town grew in population and in territory, the original owners of urban land enriched themselves from sales of lands or from leasers at a high rent. And it was an important source of capital accumulation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

There were two radical changes in the process of crafts production and in trading process in thirteenth, fourteenth centuries. First, a specifically trading element, particularly in England, drawn from the more well to do craftsmen, separated itself from production and formed exclusive trading organizations which monopolized some specific sphere of wholesale trade. Secondly, these new trading organizations very soon came to dominate the town government and to use their political power to further their own privileges and to subordinate the craftsmen. In majority of cases in the 14th century it was quite evident that the concentration of power in the towns represented the rule of merchant capital. It managed to restrict the crafts to trading retail in the local market, and here the local market was not the main outlet for their products. It subordinated the craftsmen to merchants with whom and on whose terms the producers had to deal.

The increased agricultural production (as a result of improved plough, new harness, use of horse for ploughing and two/three crop rotation) the countryside could spare sections of rural population from agriculture and made them available for engaging in craft production in towns. The increased rural produce of grain, poultry products, wines, wool and yarn had a demand and ready market in towns. The growing commercial activities gave an impetus to growth of craft production. Now the towns, which to begin with were centres of exchange, grew into the centres of production.

In Europe Guilds as organization of craftsmen and merchants strengthened and dominated the urban economy and governance. A new spirit of enterprise and initiative swept through the towns. The period is seen as the age of big merchants who were indispensable to industrial revolution. Large scale construction activities were undertaken to meet the growing demand for habitations, business, industry and governance. They gave a distinct physical character to towns common to almost all parts of Europe.

The methods of governance underwent changes. A large set of regulations also came into use regulating the social and business transactions and lives of people. A few important ones were: i) Standardization of weights and measures and strict implementation of these adopted by each town had its unique feature and carried the seal of its guarantee; ii) Towns came to have their own autonomy with restrictions on entry and stay within its limits. In many towns outsiders were to stay at designated places and even register themselves, iii) Taking up any profession or practicing of craft was regulated and required official permission, iv) Taxes on crafts and business were to be decided by the towns and not the king, v) The working hours for market and business as also for workmen were to be dictated. Even the days of the week were decided for specified business dealings or holding markets. The timings and days for courts and institutions of governance were also accordingly adopted. The earlier concept of church having the bells for timing as per their requirement was completely replaced with the concept of dividing time into fixed and equal proportions to suit the needs of towns. This gave rise to the making of new clocks and watches (14th century), vi) The constructions of homes or shops were also subjected to regulations and in most of the cases prior authorization was required.

The towns evolved through a process of economic, social and cultural synthesis and came to acquire a distinct character. At the same time they also retained some of the social and cultural features of the settlers. The towns attracted people, depending on their size, from a given region, far off places or even different nationalities. The immigrants in many a cases brought with them their folklore, traditions, customs and festivals. They formed their own communities. However in towns they adopted a new social life where now instead of clan the family and household was the anchor of life and new social ties evolved. Towns attracted the practioners of faith and became centres of religious preaching. The great importance assigned to towns by the church is quite evident from the fact that large number of cathedrals and prominent churches were established in them. The towns during this period emerged as great centres of knowledge replacing monasteries. New educated class combined with scientific development and growth of arts, literature, and new ideas flourished in the new opportunities provided by the towns. By the end of medieval period towns completely dominated the social, cultural, political and economic life of the age.

The political and social victory of the urban middle class, and of its peculiar sets of values, had revolutionary consequences in economics. But this was not the case with the towns of Islamic world, India and China where the middle class could not emerge in a revolutionary fashion and the cities of medieval Asia were not autonomous politically, socially and economically. They were ruled and dominated by the feudal rulers of these countries. They could not give a lead to modern social, political and economic transformation.

With the appearance of the medieval city and the emergence of the urban bourgeoisie, a new Europe was to born. Every aspect of socio-economic life was transformed. The urban revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the prelude to, and created necessary conditions for the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century.

22.8 SUMMARY

Urbanism played a very important role not only in Europe but in other parts of medieval world also. The rise of towns and cities had been significant in different societies in all periods through the history but the urbanism of the medieval period was quite different than the earlier phases of urbanism. The urbanism of medieval period had remarkable continuity in the process of transition to the modern world. It gave rise to a number of significant administrative, social and economic institutions.

You must have noticed that during medieval period number of urban centres increased, their physical size and population grew at a faster pace especially during the 16th and 17th centuries. The physical layout of towns with enclosed walls and gates separating them from the countryside are common to both European and Asian townships. Culturally urban centres were quite different from the surrounding countryside. The cities and towns of Europe enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy as compared to their counterparts in Asia. Inspite of physical separation from the countryside there was a lot of economic and social interaction between the towns and rural areas. The economy and society represented by towns dominated the societies they were located in. They emerged especially in Europe as the main centres which led the way for the transition to modern world.

22.9 EXERCISES

1) Give a brief account of Urbanization in ancient world.

2) Write a note on the growth of towns in Europe during medieval period.

3) Compare the towns of Europe with Asia.

4) Write a short note on relationship between towns and countryside.

5) Discuss the main features of society, economy and administration of medieval towns in Europe.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 23 TECHNOLOGIES OF WARFARE AND COMMUNICATION

Structure

23.1 Introduction

23.2 Revival of Infantry and its Impact

23.3 Firearms, Gunpowder and Fortifications

  23.3.1 Gunpowder Revolution

  23.3.2 Changes in Fortifications

  23.3.3 Use of Firearms and Military Tactics

  23.3.4 Reactions of the Traditional Warrior Class

23.4 Gunpowder at the Sea

23.5 Changes in the Military Logistics

23.6 Transport and Navigation

23.7 Summary

23.8 Exercises

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

23.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of warfare and its technologies tends to be Euro-centric, because it was, after all, the Europeans who had conquered most of the world, and the weapons and modes of warfare invented by them which still dominate the planet. As Europe made a transition from medieval feudal age to modern industrial age, it started evolving a system of warfare which was distinguished by its disciplined application of existing technologies to wars. Generally we single out the invention of gunpowder as the turning point in the history of tactics and strategy of warfare. But as we will see, new technology was only peripheral to the essential early phase of military revolution in Europe. There is no doubt that firearms induced many changes in the institutional life of armies. It reduced the mounted knights and cavalry from leading actor on the battle field to irrelevance by fifteenth century. But apart from technology, these changes were also a result of professionalization of army that gradually transformed small feudal levies into standing armies comprising of mercenaries under the direct control of absolute monarchs. Similarly transport, navigation and changes in communication also entailed many social changes. While the role of horse declined on the battlefield, it remained the chief and efficient means of transport on land-in the pre-modern Europe.

The main focus of this Unit will be to discuss the changes in technologies of warfare and communication in the pre-modern Europe. We will analyze the role of military innovations and their impact on tactics, strategy and organizational aspect of war-machinery. Finally, how these changes and transformations in technologies and army affected society and its institutions, too, will be examined.

23.2 REVIVAL OF INFANTRY AND ITS IMPACT

Cavalry was the dominant arm of medieval European armies. It was the basis of power of the feudal lords and noblemen. The average subject in the medieval peasant society could not take part in cavalry warfare because only wealthy feudal landowners could afford the horses and armour required. But with proper training and discipline, a peasant could certainly have been turned into an effective infantryman. However, infantry implies large number of soldiers in the fighting ranks. Hence, changes in the size of army could mean placing military power in the hands of ordinary peasants. Such changes in the composition of armed forces would have had revolutionary consequences for the rigidly stratified feudal societies.

The revival of infantry, however, was related to changes in technology of warfare itself. Before the Hundred year's war, (between England and France, 1337 – 1453) armies of Western Europe relied heavily on the crossbow, despite religious prohibitions against it because of its lethal power. It was a mechanical device which, as its clock work was wound against a spring, stored enough energy to discharge a heavy bolt with precise accuracy and to long range when a release mechanism, a trigger, was pulled. During 14th century, it was in common use on the battle fields as a potent weapon of war because of its bolt's power to pierce armour at medium and short range. The mechanism and shape of the crossbow lent itself to adaptation for gunpowder use. During fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the English used longbow men to great effect. At the climax of the hundred years' war, over half of the English infantrymen were longbow men. They outclassed crossbowmen, who were not employed in large number after the 15th century in European armies. In the next century, the longbow, in turn, gave way, though only slowly, to small fire arms and muskets. In fact, the first signs of shift to infantry came during the Hundred Years War in which English long bowmen protected themselves from cavalry charges and repeatedly destroyed French formations of heavily armoured cavalry. In an attempt to protect themselves, the mounted knights were first driven to use plate armour – the classical iron pajamas worn by the last few generations of European cavalry. But they could not protect their horses all over with similar armours – the weight would have been too much for the horse. With their horses injured, the knights were forced to dismount and wearing about 60 pounds plate armour each, and attempting to charge on foot like infantrymen presented a pathetic sight. Cavalry was literally dead. Other elements of infantry – uniforms, numbered units, flags to identify them and keep them together, regular drill, marching in step etc. were required to mould soldiers into professionals and inculcate discipline on the battlefield.

The European States in 15th and 16th centuries reinvented the infantry armies of classical antiquity – now in a new political and social context. It was the absolutist rulers and monarchs, striving to increase the power of State through centralization and by undermining the old feudal aristocracy, who fostered the new infantry armies. They were found more effective and saved the king from having to call on the feudal levies of the barons in times of war. Ideally, the monarch would have liked to hire or conscript his new army from his own population. In fact, there were several attempts to create national militias under the control of Central government. For example, there were 4,65,000 men registered in the Spanish militia in 1694. These attempts were not so successful due to resistance of peasants and aristocracy. So the absolute rulers employed large number of mercenaries, who would fight under contract for any state ready to pay them. The export of companies of trained mercenary soldiers became practically a national enterprise in the poorer parts of Europe like Switzerland.

The increasing reliance on fire power in battle – whether with archers, field artillery or musketeers – led not only to the eclipse of cavalry by infantry in most armies, but also were accompanied by a dramatic increase in the size of most European armies. In the sixteenth century, most States had armed men in thousands, with the exceptions of Charles V of Spain whose army was estimated at 1,50,000 men. By 1630s, however, most of the leading European powers employed about 1,50,000 soldiers each. By the end of seventeenth century, French army had about 4,00,000 soldiers. However, the size of army was still determined by the cost of maintaining mercenaries.

23.3 FIREARMS, GUNPOWDER AND FORTIFICATION

The use of gunpowder and introduction of firearms completely altered the techniques of warfare and methods of fortifications. The tactics of warfare in the battle field also underwent major changes. We need to discuss them in some details.

23.3.1 Gunpowder Revolution

The explosive results of mixing saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal were first discovered in China. The Chinese were making use of gun-powder from 13th century onward. Mongols adopted this innovation and probably transmitted it to the Europe. The triumph of longbow in Europe was also accompanied in 14th century by adoption of gun-technology. In the early 1320s, first real metal guns were being cast in Europe. From that point onward, the Europeans took the lead in developing firearms. Countries of Western Europe and the Turks competed with one another in production of bigger and better guns. The improvement in metallurgy and gunpowder also improved the accuracy and efficiency of cannons. By fifteenth century gun technology had made enormous advances. Cannonballs had replaced arrows and guns had assumed tubular forms. Nevertheless, the use of cannon remained confined to siege warfare. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was result of battering down of its fortification by the Turkish cannons. The cannons with which the French kings and the Ottoman Turks knocked through defensive fortifications of their enemies suffered from many serious handicaps. They were large, heavy and mounted on immobile platforms. As a result they could be brought into action only on the territory their owners already controlled. For cannon to become a more useful instrument of military campaign they had to be lightened enough to be transported on wheels at the same speed as the army that accompanied them. Only with such a mobile capacity different units of armed force (infantry, cavalry and artillery) be integrated otherwise artillery might be captured easily by the enemy. By the end of fifteenth century, French had designed guns that combined the elements of mobility and manoeuvrability.

23.3.2 Changes in Fortifications

The strength of medieval fortress had been based on the height of its walls and their thickness. They had withstood the pressures of enemy as it was difficult to scale the crest and thickness made the siege tactics less effective. Even use of mines was difficult task that ditches and moats easily defeated. The new mobile cannons, because they could be rapidly brought into action close to a wall, and then handled to fire accurately in predictable area of impact, transferred the effect of mining to artillery. Iron cannon balls, directed at the base of a wall in a horizontal pattern of attack could rapidly cut a channel in the stone work, the cumulative effect of which was to use the structure of the wall against itself the higher the wall more quickly it would become unstable and wider the breach it left when toppled. The fall of the wall automatically filled up the ditch at its foot with rubble, thus providing passage for an assault party. This necessitated a response in the form of improvisation to strengthen old fortifications. At Pisa, for instance, fortification – engineers contrived an inner earthern bank and ditch behind the city's stone wall. However, an alternative system of fortification was needed. The basic concept in the new kind of fortification of castles was simple. As the mobile cannons did maximum damage to the high walls, new walls designed to resist them were to stand low. However, a fortress so built was open to escalade. A storming party of enemy-troops with ladders to sweep over the crest could easily get into the interior of fortress by surprise attack. The new system of fortification, therefore, incorporated features that resisted bombardment of cannon balls and held the enemy's infantry at a distance. The solution to this problem of surrounding heights while acquiring depth was angular bastion, which stood forward of the walls, dominated the ditch or moat, served as a fire platform for defender's cannons and firearms, and was strong enough not to be battered shapeless by a concentration of enemy fire. The most suitable design was with four faces: two forming a wedge that pointed towards the surrounding countryside so as to present a glancing surface to enemy fire, and where counter-attacking artillery could be mounted, and two that joined the wedge to the wall at right angles, from the rampart of which defenders could use cannon and firearms to sweep the ditch and stretches of wall between the bastions. The new bastion fortresses were erected at enormous cost and labour but they restored the advantage of defence over offence as rapidly as cannons had reversed it at the end of fifteenth century.

23.3.3 Use of Firearms and Military Tactics

The use of firearms meanwhile grew more varied. In the fifteenth century, the hand grenade became a standard military weapon, and special battalions of 'grenadiers' were trained to throw bombs in enemy-lines. The most remarkable innovation of 15th century was a hand gun – an ancestor of the modern rifle. The French arquebus was its most typical model. Initially the weapon was awkward and ineffective but it was improved in the 16th century and became an effective weapon in the French-Spanish Wars. The heavier, longer and more lethal musket with larger range was also discovered during this period. The early musket needed two men and a support stuck in the ground for proper manipulation and targeting, but gradually it grew shorter and more wieldy. In the hands of an expert gunner, it could reach a target at 500 yards – about 200 yards beyond the range of longbow. The performance of early firearms, however, still left much to be desired. A well-trained archer could discharge ten arrows a minute, but the arquebus of the early 16th century took several minutes to reload. The attractiveness of small fire arms was because of little training required to use them. Therefore, the introduction of the musket in the 1550s, beginning with the Spanish army in Italy, accelerated the process. Gradually, the musketeer became the master of battle field and drove off most other specialists. Even though a good archer could still fire several arrows in the time it took to load a musket, the use of firearms and muskets ushered in a revolution in the field warfare. English persisted with long-bowmen well into the seventeenth century, but most of the armies shifted to musket. The process was speeded up when the dangerous and inefficient matchlock, an attachment for priming (placing gun powder and connecting it with fuse) and firing both hand gun and musket, began to be replaced by more efficient wheel-lock. But although archers gave way to musketeers, pikemen (pike was a long wooded shaft with pointed steel or iron head) continued. In the course of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Swiss army exhibited that tightly formed squares of pikemen could defeat both cavalry charges and attacks by other infantry units. It was now the pikemen who protected the musketeers. The rate of firing from muskets was very slow. By the beginning of seventeenth centuries, an experienced musketeer could get off one round every two minutes. It could mean only one round against a cavalry charge and the onset of hand-to-hand combat. The situation could be salvaged by improving the musket's accuracy through rifled guns.

Another strategy for increasing the musketeers' rate of fire was evolved in the 1590s by the Commanders of the Dutch army, Count Maurice and William Louis of Nassau. They found that if their men were drawn up in a series of long lines, the first rank firing together and then retiring to reload while the following ranks came forward and did the same, then a continuous hail of fire would be maintained to keep check on the advance of enemy troops. This came to be known as the 'Volley' technique. The use of volley-fire changed the battle tactics. Now it became necessary for armies to spread out during battle, both to maximize the effect of their outgoing fire and to minimize the target for incoming fire. It also placed greater emphasis on the ability of entire tactical units to perform the motions necessary for volley firing both swiftly and in unison. This required prolonged practice and drill. Troops had to be trained to fire, countermarch, load and manoeuvre all together. Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in seventeenth century utilized the full potential of volley-firing technique. The infantries of Europe were transformed into body of professional soldiers – with long training and necessary discipline due to this change in military tactics.

The effectiveness of small firearms and cannon, though modest by modern standards, increased steadily. Riffling was introduced in 1520s, though it was not in general military use before the end of the 18th century. Hand-grenades were improved in 1536. The pistol was invented in Spain about 1540, and wheel-lock pistol in 1543. Cartridges were becoming more lethal. The bayonet, which seems to have been originated as a dagger at Bayonne in the 15th century, became when attached to a wooden haft and plugged into the muzzle of a musket, a common weapon in battle during the 17th century for hand-to-hand combat. By the 18th century the rifle, with flintlock fusil, lighter, simpler and more wieldy than a musket and with attached bayonet had become the standard battle weapon of an infantryman.

23.3.4 Reactions of the Traditional Warrior Class

The traditional warrior class of medieval Europe, trapped in the military ethos which accorded warrior status only to horsemen and accustomed to an infantry prepared to stand and fight with edged weapons, resisted the changes introduced by the gunpowder. They thought that only face-to-face combat was honourable and worthy of the descendents of armoured men-at-arms, fighting from horseback. Fighting from a distance with missiles and firearms, like the crossbowmen, long bowmen and musketeers did, offered no scope for the individual feats of glory and courage. The mounted knights desired that such infantry men, who accompanied them to battle field, should take the manly risks of standing to receive opposing cavalry at point of pike. If guns had to take their place on the battle field, then let it be behind ramparts, which was where missile weapons had always belonged. The cavalry man did not want to dismount from his horse and learn the black art of gunpowder himself. A man armed with crossbow or handgun or musket, without any of the long apprenticeship to arms necessary to make a knight or even equally without the moral effect required of pike-wielding footman, could easily kill either of them without putting himself in danger. It appeared cowardly and treacherous to the nobility. The new military technology made the skill-at-arms of the knights; their strength and their honourable fight look worthless. But war is a serious business of destroying the ranks of enemy. Therefore, despite all the indignation and protests of the traditional feudal warrior class, it was evident by the mid- sixteenth century that firearms as well as cannons had come to stay. By the end of the 16th century, cavalry itself was losing its decisive purpose on the battlefield. Along with it the right of the knights to determine how armies should be ordered and the social-pre-eminence of feudal warrior class were also undermined. The French and German aristocracies resisted these changes, but changes in military techniques, tactics and strategy made their efforts futile. The centralized states also increasingly wanted value for money they spent on military endeavours. In England, Italy and Spain, the traditional military class was willing to learn the techniques of new arms and the technology of gun-powder and ready to persuade itself that to fight on foot might be equally honourable profession after all.

23.4 GUNPOWDER AT THE SEA

The early voyages of discovery by the Europeans (like of Dias, Columbus, Cabot) were not made by fighting ships. Such explorers went in small ships designed for coastal trade, with few arms, beyond the personal weapons of the ships' companies. Sea-fighting in the late medieval period was mainly a matter of boarding and entering the ships. The attacker sought to bring his ship into direct contact with the enemy, and to seize and hold fast with grappling hooks and lines, in such a position that his men could leap over into enemy's vessel and overpower resistance by hand-to-hand combat. From fighting tops like the mast—heads; the bowmen and hand gunners shot at the defenders, in order to keep them scattered and under cover. Sometimes fire was employed, but in most sea-fighting, the attacker's aim was to capture rather than destroy the enemy's ship.

The fighting galleys represented an extension and modification of these ideas. They were usually fitted with rams. A galley commander tried to catch the enemy broadside on, with the ram to cripple his motive power, the oars, and if possible to hole his hull. His men-at-arms, massed on the raised platform in the bows, would leap down into the enemy's waist. Sailing ships often co-operated with galleys in naval warfare, either as transports intended to land men for fighting ashore or as armed merchant auxiliaries, slightly modified for war and with soldiers on board, a body distinct from the sailors who worked the ship. It was probably the Venetians who initially introduced the ship-borne artillery in the fourteenth century. But by the middle of fifteenth century almost all European fighting ships carried cannons. Artillery revolutionized sea-fighting. The transportation of heavy guns was a problems on land but cannon's weight could be easily accommodated in the ship while cannon-balls and powder could easily be housed in its cargo-carrying spaces. The only technical problem that encountered was that of absorbing its recoil within a vessel's confined dimensions. If mounted free, its firing would damage the ship's timbers. It had to be harnessed to the structure and it recoil decelerated by a breaking mechanism or else transferred to ship's own line of least résistance. The fighting ships of the 15th century carried forged cannons of small size only. The weapons of gun's barrel and the insecurity of detachable breech-block kept the guns small. However, in the 16th century, bigger cannons cast in a single piece, instead of forging from many pieces, from brass or gun-metals (an alloy of copper, tin and zinc) were built. This was made possible by changes in metallurgical techniques in Flanders and Germany and later in England. Similarly, breech-loading gave way to muzzle-loading in the sixteenth century guns. Although muzzle-loading of guns took more time and trouble, especially on ships, it was more than compensated by the increased strength which resulted from casting the guns in a single piece. It was the cast guns of sixteenth century, not the forged cannons of the earlier century that dramatically changed the design of naval fighting ships as well as the tactics of their employment. The design of ocean-going ships was adapted to fit big guns on them. Port-holes were provided for guns and turrets for gunners; the effectiveness of ship's broadside became the measure of her prowess. By the middle of 17th century, such a fighting ship could carry fifty guns a piece and a naval fleet of seventy or more ship emphasized the power of artillery on sea. The development of nautical gunnery not only made European ships more formidable; it also made ships' companies more homogeneous, and therefore, better suited to long voyages. Fighting ships or galleys in the fifteenth century and for much of the 16th century carried two distinct bodies of men: seamen or sailors under their own officers, who worked the sea; and the soldiers under their own officers, who did the fighting. The Captain was usually a soldier, though not necessarily a professional. He might be a gentleman adventurer. The master of sailors was a technical expert under the Captain's command, and his social inferior. The hostile rivalry at sea meant that ship will embark on voyage with a large body of soldiers, untrained to the sea. The possibility of divided opinions on a voyage in which most decisions would be nautical rather than military in nature, was highly dangerous. Heavy artillery on the ships necessitated that seamen understood both seamanship and gunnery. The lessons of homogeneous manning and a unified command, however, also gained acceptance gradually.

23.5 CHANGES IN THE MILITARY LOGISTICS

As the armies and navies grew in size and as soldiers and sailors continued for long terms in service due to creation of big standing armies by the European states, the military science of logistics (feeding, equipping, transporting and housing) emerged as a specialized branch. Fortresses and naval stations constituted not only homes for local soldiers and sailors but also supply centres for the troops deployed in the region. An elaborate institutional arrangement was needed to supply food, fodder and ammunitions to the troops. The constraints of land-transport and supply arrangements also obliged the armies to restrict their wars to certain well-defined border areas that were dotted with fortresses, and early modern warfare was mostly a slow and cumbersome business consisting mainly of sieges.

Though warfare in the early modern Europe was still a restricted warfare in comparison to the great wars of last century, there is little doubt that the size of semi-permanent armies was increasing in the 15th and 17th centuries. According to one estimate, between 10 – 12 million Europeans became soldiers in the seventeenth century. The problems of recruitment, finance and supply for these troops had to be addressed by the European polities. The enlistment and recruitment of soldiers in itself was a problem of adequate supply of men for war. The early modern European armies were a mixture of mercenaries and volunteers. The volunteers had to be paid a 'bounty' or premium depending on the seasonal demand for agricultural labour and the current food prices. The mercenary and volunteer soldiers came from different social background and joined army for different motives but certainly hardship and want of livelihood were the most prominent motives. The professional mercenary soldiers were also in great demand but it had an inherent danger that they could change side at any moment and their loyalty could be suspect. The sovereign states, therefore, tried to enlist recruits from among their own subjects. Finland and Sweden were the first states who attempted to introduce some sort of compulsory military service or conscription in the early 17th century.

Many European states in the 16th and 17th centuries paid private contractors and entrepreneurs to supply military services which they could no longer afford to organize for themselves. By the end of the sixteenth century, several states had begun to recruit and supply their armies – particularly units required to serve abroad – through private contractors. The system flourished during the Thirty Years War. The basic qualification of these military entrepreneurs was economic power and resources at their disposal. The army's rank and file also received considerable sustenance by other means – food and other supplies were secured from the civilian population and local communities through whom they passed. This "plunder", however, was systematized and controlled as a kind of "protection-money". In some cases, a kind of 'contribution-system' was worked out by local administrative authorities and army authorities. The system of contractors kept the armies fed, clothed and equipped but it had its defects. A few contractors were able to provide sufficient artillery from their own resources. For reasons of national security and exorbitant costs, most states deemed it necessary to create a stock of field and siege guns. The material supplied by contractors was also not always satisfactory. If arms and ammunition were not in perfect working condition, it could spell disaster for an army on the battlefield.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

23.6 TRANSPORT AND NAVIGATION

The medieval Europe had inherited the legacy of Roman highways but it could not maintain it. Some of the ancient Roman roads served medieval man, not as means of communication but as quarries for neighbouring villages and towns. Nevertheless, those that were more frequently used were kept passable by constant attention to their surfaces, side drainage, and bridges. The road maps of the late medieval times provide proof that the arterial highways of the old Roman Empire were still in use. However, only few local roads of the medieval times were paved, Upkeep of roads, old or new, was responsibility of several authorities. King's highways were properly maintained, not only for military purposes but also as routes to seaports and major markets. Important urban centres and markets also sometimes paved strategic roads with cobble stones or slabs, levying special taxes for the purpose. In England local parishes were supposed to maintain roads, but they did not have enough resources for this purpose. In France and other Continental countries some sort of forced labour or corvee' was resorted to as a means of maintaining roads. The step was not very successful.

Despite these weaknesses, the transport in the Western Europe was fairly well organized and a highly competitive business during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. Carts were in common use, although, pack-animals and even pack-humans (porters) were used occasionally for short local trips or over different terrains for carrying goods. For heavy long-distance haulage of goods, the two wheeled and four wheeled carts were standard means of transport. 'Cart- brokers' in large commercial centres put merchant in touch with carters' guild. Most trips, especially in the bandit-infested territory, were made in slow convoys, for security was precarious and policing almost unknown in the countryside. Occasionally, however, a special courier could make fast solo trip in case of urgency.

A major hindrance in the way of constructing new roads was the high costs. Expenses could be covered by charging toll charges on travellers, but such levies proved quite burdensome. When centralized administration emerged with the growth of absolutist monarchies, royal government also demonstrated good interest in an efficient centralized system of transport and communication. King Louis XI of France renovated main highways and in 1464 reinstituted a system of postal couriers. In the early sixteenth century, the Holy Roman Emperor granted Franz Von Taxis authority to organize a postal system for the Empire. The system of couriers, postal services and coach service expanded in the 17th century with the expanding intensity of circulation of goods. The London penny post (1680) was the cheapest of such services. France was developing technical expertise on road-building in the seventeenth century as is evident from several treatise on the subject. The practical results of such knowledge, however, became visible in 18th century only. The Tudor rulers of England also paid attention to the improvement of road-conditions. In 1555 Queen Mery appointed inspectors of roads. By 1663, however, a Turnpike Act in England permitted collections of tolls. After this, English roads became the enterprise of private turnpike companies operating under a government franchise. The improvement of highways also stimulated better construction of bridges over water ways. Despite these improvements and efforts by the

States, land transportation remained slow and difficult. The horse remained the fastest means of transport on land in Europe until the 19th century, although oxen, mules, donkeys and reindeer were also used as draft animals. Horse-drawn wagons were usually uncomfortable. The cartwrights of Hungarian village Kocs devised a practical passenger vehicle, known in Hungarian as the *Kocsi* (French *Coche*, German *Kutsche* and English *Coach*). France, Germany and England gradually adopted this mode of conveyance in the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1634, over 3,400 coaches were operating on the English routes. Introduction of steel springs in coaches as a replacement for leather straps in 1670 made them more comfortable.

Water-transport was generally much cheaper mode than land in the early modern period. The timber shipped from the Scandinavian region used to cost less in English coastal regions than timber carted from the English hinterland. Until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries most sea transport in Europe was coast-wise. River-traffic was more important to Eastern Europe with its longer and slower-current rivers than to the Western Europe. Seafaring ships of the West were of two distinct types before the seventeenth century – the oared galley and the sailing ship. In the Mediterranean Sea, until about 1500 the galley with one bank of oars was the main vessel. Oars steadily increased in length, even to fifty feet. The steering oar gave way to the rudder, and man power was supplemented by masts and sails. The Venetians and the Genoese used huge galleys equipped with both oars and sails. Meanwhile the sailing vessels, with its stern-post rudder that permitted more effective steering, were being used on the Atlantic Sea. The Portuguese and the Spanish developed the caravel, a small, broad, lateen-sailed (triangular on long yard at angle of 45o to mast) vessel for ocean-travel. This was the type of ship used by Vasco de Gama and Columbus. By this time, rigging had improved. The navigators could beat-up the wind and achieve greater manoeuvrability on high-seas, with three-masted vessels (two masts square-rigged and one lateen-rigged). Such sea-sailing ships became common from 16th century onwards. Telescope was quickly adapted to navigation in the seventeenth century. These new navigational aids and better ships facilitated opening of new markets, trade in new commodities, consumption and commerce of larger quantity of older commodities and imports of precious metal from the New World. The aggregate effect of these changes resulted in what some historians call “the commercial revolution” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The changes in shipping and commerce also stimulated the ship-building industry. In the seventeenth century, though the Dutch had to import their ship-building materials, they were perhaps the leading ship manufacturers and builders of marine carriers of Europe. At the end of the 16th century, the Dutch constructed the *Fluitschip* (The flute’ in English), especially designed to carry the bulk- goods (such as wine, salt, grain and timber). It was of slender design, lighter weight, and shallow draft that was faster and cheaper to build and easier to run. There were also simultaneous improvements in the development and engineering of dock, maintenance of ports, construction of new light houses etc. Internal waterways, i.e. rivers and canals also played a significant role in transport. King’s encouraged the construction of canals. The Languedoc Canal (1681) in France, 148 miles long with 119 locks, connecting Rhone and Garonne, was the engineering marvel of the age.

23.7 SUMMARY

The technologies of warfare underwent drastic changes in the early modern Europe, necessitating changes in military tactics and strategy as well. The use of gun powder by newly resurrected infantries (in the form of small firearms like hand guns, muskets and rifles) and by the big cannons of artillery and their applications on sea-going ships changed the nature of warfare as well as the institutional or organizational structures of the early modern armies in Europe. On the land, the effectiveness of infantries dealt a death blow to the 'honour' and pride of feudal knights as the artilleries brought many old castles and forts to the ground. The European ships, fitted with big guns assumed naval superiority and marked the beginning of domination of the world by the big European powers. All these changes were taking place under the watchful eye of absolutist monarchs, who adopted these changes in their new mercenary standing armies, to further enhance the power of states. This period also witnessed the increase in the circulation and exchanges of commodities on an unprecedented scale and a modest beginning was made to improve the transport and communication networks on land to match the requirements of new markets. However, the advances in sea-transport were more significant, again signalling the ascendancy of Europe.

23.8 EXERCISES

1) Write a note on the importance of infantry in the military organization of early modern Europe?

2) How did gunpowder and firearms change the techniques of warfare?

3) Compare the land-transport and sea-transport during 16th and 17th centuries.

4) How the military revolution of early modern times affected military logistics?

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 24 TRANSITION TO MODERN WORLD

Structure

24.1 Introduction

24.2 Meaning of Modern World

24.3 Decline of Feudalism

24.4 Transformation of Political Structures

- 24.4.1 Emergence of Centralized States in Europe
- 24.4.2 East and South Asian Political Transformation
- 24.4.3 Changes in the Arab States

24.5 Trading Activities

- 24.5.1 Emergence of Europe as the Centre of World Trade
- 24.5.2 Trade Structure in East Asia
- 24.5.3 Trading Activities of the Arabs

24.6 Economic Modernization – Changes in Trade, Commerce and Industry

24.7 Cultural Transformation – Science, Religion and Society

24.8 New Methods of Warfare

24.9 Why Europe Triumphed?

24.10 Summary

24.11 Exercises

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

24.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier Units, you have studied in detail the debates on feudalism and its decline, the commercial structure of the medieval world and the salient features of the cultural life. In this Unit you shall see the changes that start taking shape in the medieval societies and these led to the emergence of modern world. This Unit explains:

- what is meant by modern world;
- changes that were taking place in feudalism from the point of view of agrarian production;
- how the decentralized political structures transformed into centralized states and the corresponding changes in other major parts of the world;
- how the new trade routes contributed to the emergence of modern world system;
- the impact of international trade on manufacturing and commerce in different parts of the world;
- cultural trends in different societies and the ways in which these contributed to the formation of new social attitudes;

- the changes in the methods of warfare; and
- the reasons for the triumph of Europe as the dominant region.

Historians regard the period around 1500 as the age of transition from the medieval to the modern way of life. Such a transition has conventionally been considered valid only for the European society as many of the crucial events responsible for this transition had profound effects on Europe. Yet this passage from the medieval to the modern world was not an exclusive intra-European phenomenon. Europe itself had borrowed many of the ideas and knowledge from the non-European world, especially from the Arabs and from the Chinese. What happened in the subsequent five centuries was the integration of different regions of the globe that shook life everywhere and sooner or later the old ways into new. From the late fifteenth century began the rise of Europe to the stage of dominance. The decline of feudalism in some parts of the world brought about changes in the agrarian structures, which were becoming more responsive to the market pressures. Geography provided a stimulus to the maritime states of Europe. Once the traditional monopoly of the Italians in the Levant region and the Arabs in the Indian Ocean was destroyed by the discovery of new sea routes around Africa, the societies in Asia and Africa witnessed profound changes. The rise of trans-Atlantic trade routes brought the trading world much closer and marked the first stage of global integration. Trade and commerce, missionary activities and new methods of warfare became the chief tools of expansion. The process of empire building commenced from the late-fifteenth century and set in motion the forces of capitalism based on competition and exploitation. In the political sphere, almost all the regions witnessed a transformation of state structure from a decentralized or fragmented to centralized form. The rise of nation-states in Europe with definite boundaries and the amalgamation of smaller principalities or states into centralized empires were not confined to Europe alone but can be seen in China, India and Turkey. These new political structures provided security to trade and economic activities. Developments in the field of culture in the non-European societies first influenced Europe and were later themselves profoundly affected by the European developments in the sphere of science and technology. Scientific and cultural progress in Europe created new social attitudes and influenced the mentality of the people. Improvements in the science of manufacturing, artillery, weapons, techniques of navigation and military warfare led to the supremacy of the western world.

24.2 MEANING OF MODERN WORLD

Modernization implies making suitable changes and bringing reforms to meet the present day challenges. It includes changes in political and economic structures and to develop social attitudes based on rationality and scientific approach. One way of looking at the emergence of the modern world is the process of change in the direction of industrialization – transition from agrarian regimes to the industrial and the capitalist stage. But this is to see Modernization through a telescopic eye. A modern country like Denmark is not a fully developed industrial power but more of agriculture based economy. Italy, the most industrialized region of Europe, in the late medieval period took centuries to emerge as a modern state. Constant reforms in every sphere of life – administration, legal system, economy and society, religion and thought –constitute the path of modernization. From this point of view, we can say that till the end of the Middle Ages, every society – the Europeans, the Chinese, the

Indians and the Arabs made significant contributions in changing the lives of the people in their own ways. Each society adopted its own model of modernization that differed in sequence. For all their dramatic novelty the oceanic discoveries of the late fifteenth century by men like Columbus, (discovered America) Diaz (found route via Cape of Good Hope) and Vasco da Gama (traced the direct sea route to India) must be seen in the context of a long period of preparation and development. Till this period, the Arabs and the Chinese had led the rest.

Marshall Hodgson, in his three-volume work *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in the World Civilization* places history of Islamic civilization in the context of world history. In this he re-evaluates modern history (post-1500) and the place of Europe in it. He partially transcends the Eurocentric modernization theory and instead treats it as a global process. Modernity does not mean westernization. Instead of treating the post Abbasid Caliphate period till the rise of the gun powder empires' of the sixteenth century as the period of decline, Hodgson believes that it was the time of the greatest advances of Islamic civilization that witnessed the elaboration of its culture into China, India, South and South east Asia well into the Balkans and the Mediterranean States. He argues that the Renaissance did not inaugurate modernity. Instead, it brought Europe up to the cultural level of the other major civilizations. It did so in some measure by assimilating the advances of other Asian civilizations. It is not necessary that the process of modernization take off simultaneously in all the regions of the globe, synchronizing with the rise of modern west. China and the Arabs had already reached a reasonable level of maturity when the Europeans started coming out of the feudal mode. It is also true that from this period the non-European world slowed down or even stagnated for various reasons, in comparison to the west. In fact, after the fifteenth century, it was Europe that led the world and dictated changes through its scientific ideas, trade and imperialism. Henceforth, various civilizations began to move from the relative ignorance of each other into direct and accelerating contact across all the oceans. The physical hindrances between regions had been largely overcome by men of the fifteenth century. The pace of change hastened everywhere from the nineteenth century onwards as the coming of industrialization unleashed the forces of imperialism and nationalism. Many non-European societies were forced to carry out programmes of reforms and modernization to defend themselves against the imperialist onslaughts and to occupy honourable place in the community of nations.

24.3 DECLINE OF FEUDALISM

It would be wrong to say that the decline of feudalism was a universal phenomenon and that the transition was smooth and quick-paced. In fact, it was an extremely slow process and it almost took three centuries and even more for the forces of capitalism to triumph. England, the Netherlands, some regions of northwestern Europe and parts of France were among the first geographical regions to experience the decline of feudal order. In eastern and central Europe, feudalism persisted and even strengthened after the crisis of the seventeenth century. Without going into the debate on the reasons for the decline of feudalism, we can say that a combination of factors — demographic, trade, inner contradiction in the feudal mode of production and class conflict, led to the transition from medieval to modern world. You have already studied in Block 6, unit 23, the relationship between trade and decline of feudalism.

Northwestern Europe came to occupy an important place on the new trade route that developed along the Atlantic coastline in the sixteenth century. However, the feudal decline had set in earlier than this. The growing burden of population and the excessive exploitation of the peasant population by the feudal lords had created a crisis in agriculture. The unresponsive nature of medieval agriculture, the growing demands for revenue, feudal limitations, the mounting expenses due to wars and increasing price level and the rising pressure of population had all caused this crisis. The emergence of world market became a crucial factor in the decline of feudalism. Agriculture was forced to transform itself wherever the pulls of market forces became strong.

With the coming of feudal crisis the social structure underwent profound transformation and the social balance began to change though its pace varied from one region to another. The lower order began to gain greater freedom and security. Feudal dues were gradually replaced by monetary payments. The rising prices of agricultural products, the swelling of population and the growth of urbanization led to a rapid expansion of commercialization of agriculture. It offered new opportunities to the enterprising landlords but caused problems for the traditional feudal lords. The feudal aristocracy experienced a steady decline while the rise of commercial economy led to the rise of bourgeoisie. Increase in area under cultivation and improvement in yield per unit of land was the result of growing demand. In the late medieval period a three-field system had prevailed over most of Europe. From the sixteenth century, a variety of cropping methods were adopted to make a more intensive use of the soil. The practice of fallowing was abandoned, at least in parts of the Low Countries. Peas, beans, turnips and green vegetables and fodder crops were being grown. Interestingly, many of these ideas were also implemented in China. Robert Temple gives credit to China for spreading the ideas of crop rotations, drilling (plants grown in proper rows with equi-distance from one-another), intensive hoeing of weeds, etc. These were the ideas on which the European agrarian revolution was based. Even the Arabs had shown great interest in agriculture and made many innovations. The irrigation projects on Tigris and Euphrates rivers in “Sawad” or Black land led to a remarkable level of prosperity under Umayyad and early Abbasid rulers. The Arabs are credited with the introduction of rice, sugarcane, cotton tree, saffron, spinach and a variety of fruit crops to Spain and subsequently to other parts of Europe. In both the regions, China and Arab States – their respective governments showed concern in major agricultural projects such as flood control, artificial irrigation and transportation of agrarian products. In China, a number of agricultural techniques had been evolved such as the square pallet chain pump, swan-neck hoe for weeding purpose, the rotator winnowing fan and the multi-tubes for sowing seeds in drill fashion. Advances were made in the sphere of soil conservation, improvement of crops and canal linkages. However, all these changes had come about over a long period of time and were gradual and not revolutionary.

In contrast to these, the agrarian transformation of Europe was much broader in scope and its impact was felt beyond the territorial boundaries and even in the sphere of trade and manufacturing. It also had a strong impact on the social structures of different states and profoundly altered their economies.

European agriculture facilitated trade beyond the national frontiers, e.g. the Baltic region became the granary of European food grain, sending food grains to all parts of Europe through sea routes. The Low Countries, the Netherlands and some other regions began to specialize in dairy farming – Spain, England and the Alpine lands concentrated on sheep farming and began exporting wool to distant centres of production such as Flanders. At the end of the fifteenth century and in the course of the sixteenth, a great programme of drainage and dyke-building was set in motion. A wave of land reclamation took place in many parts of Europe. At many other places, enclosure of land became a common practice. The market pressures led to transition from arable farming to extensive grazing. Price-factor began to determine the direction of change in agrarian structure. During the sixteenth century, food production greatly increased and agriculture expanded enormously. Farming became more intensive and better communications between regions developed. Agriculture grew more specialized to suit the conditions of local advantages and promoted division of labour. New methods of agriculture received impetus with the setting up of printing presses in all parts of Europe that increased production of literature on new farming practices and agrarian manuals.

However, large parts of Europe continued to remain entrenched in feudal system and it took centuries to break its fetters. After centuries of stagnation, agrarian change became the dominant theme from the late fifteenth century. Regional specialization, which had been of only minor significance during the Middle Ages, became an important aspect of agricultural production. To generate additional income from agriculture, farmers and landlords began to take special steps in its sale and exports. The Price Revolution of the sixteenth century played an important role in transforming European agriculture by encouraging capitalist farming, and thereby hastened the process of feudal decline. The class structure began to change along with this, thereby laying the foundations of modern agriculture.

24.4 TRANFORMATION OF POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Transformation of political structures was one of the important developments. It was witnessed in Europe, East and South Asia and in the Arab World.

24.4.1 Emergence of Centralized States in Europe

In the late fifteenth century the people of Europe were governed in a variety of ways – hereditary, elective or even joint monarchies, oligarchies and confederations and even empires. Yet the European political structure in the late fifteenth century remained essentially feudal in character. What was driving Europe towards the modern world was the emergence of strong centralized monarchies that came to rule in some parts like France, Spain, England and Muscovy (modern Russia). The crisis of feudal economy and the internecine feudal warfare brought about significant changes that affected the relationship between the changing society and state-building process. The local coercive power of the lord and his retainers over peasantry altered with the rise of strong rulers and the state began to monopolize the use of force and subsequently reduced the powers of the feudal lords, towns and corporate groups including the church. The rise of absolute states, particularly in Western Europe implied the absorption of smaller states to form modern nation-states with definite boundaries. Russia is the best illustration of this process. From a tiny principality called Muscovy, Russia became a vast empire by this policy of territorial expansion. Similar transformation took place in Spain. This also involved the strengthening of centralized government under a single sovereign head, establishment of law and order and the application of unitary and effective measures. The absolute monarchy carried out territorial expansion and consolidation, administrative centralization and political integration. They unified the economies of their respective states by centralized taxation. They developed the administrative apparatus on modern lines with the help of a professional bureaucracy and judiciary, and maintained their power through permanently standing armies. The formation of modern administrative, judicial and financial structure had its roots in the era of absolute states. Although the exact nature of the European absolutism is a subject of debate, it is generally accepted that these states played a progressive role in facilitating the rise of capitalism. These states played the role of large-scale tax collectors and re-distributors of private income. Though based on feudal structure, these states ensured the interests of mercantile and manufacturing classes by removing internal barrier to trade, regulating external tariff in the interest of local industries, promoting colonial activities and creating trading companies. In these ways, the absolute rulers encouraged primitive accumulation of capital and created preconditions for capitalism. Moreover, these absolute states became the forerunners of modern nation-states based on the principle of sovereignty. The English Civil War (1642-49) destroyed the feudal structure of the state and brought the new landed class and the bourgeoisie to share power. The so-called Glorious Revolution ended a prolonged class war and established a constitutional arrangement that still continues with slight modifications. The nature and composition of Parliament changed dramatically from the late fifteenth century. It began to represent public opinion at the highest level and established the importance of legislature in state affairs. In France the Revolution of 1789 overthrew the feudal structure and opened the path for capitalist development. The Revolution transformed France from a medieval state to a modern nation-state by adopting sweeping reforms. The new democratic concepts of equality, liberty, citizenship and sovereignty were popularized not only in the Europe but world over, although the ideas of equality and fraternity existed in the Islamic world for centuries. The relationship between the government and the governed had undergone a major change – subjects of monarchs became the citizens of nations. After the French Revolution most of the European states were shedding the feudal traits and transforming themselves into modern nation-states.

The Reformation movement also contributed to the process of state building by creating national church in every state. It strengthened the powers of the rulers. The Reformation shattered the religious unity of Europe – the chief feature of the Middle Ages and gave birth to many new ideas like political rights and individual freedom. Medieval Christiandom was rejected in favour of secular authority.

Although Italian city-states do not fall into the pattern of absolutist state, they played an extremely important role in developing the modern rules of international relations and brought about sophistication of the art of diplomacy.

In the course of fifteenth century, Italian courts became the centres of politics. The concentration of power in the hands of the rulers came to be called *stato*, a model emulated by many European rulers. These Italian princes made a distinct contribution to the idea of "resident diplomacy". Just as the Italians had laid foundations of the techniques of modern business organization, they also perfected techniques of modern international relations. These included the practice of appointing resident ambassadors in the courts of foreign rulers, formation of offensive and defensive alliances with the opponents of their enemies, non-aggression pacts and commercial treaties – practices that are followed by all modern states. The most important contribution of the Italian states to the modern concept of international relations is the idea of balance of power. Each state tried to preserve its own territory and defend its own interests by ensuring that no single state became strong enough to enslave the other and for this a balance was maintained by a group of states to counter the design of some others. The cold-war period of the twentieth century demonstrated a similar tendency as was the anti-French coalition against Napoleon.

24.4.2 East and South Asian Political Transformation

As you have studied in the earlier units, Chinese civilization is one of the oldest in the world. Its developments were largely indigenous. China had maintained a fair degree of isolation from the rest of the world except the surrounding states. Since the eleventh century Chinese sailing vessels, some even bigger than European vessels of that time, sailed across Malay Peninsular and India into Arab region. However, the Ming rulers imposed restrictions on this trade. Trade was allowed only with those states, which accepted Chinese suzerainty. Trade was seen only as a source of taxation. The advent of the "Age of Discovery" created a drastically different situation. Portuguese and Spanish inroads into southern China via new sea routes in the sixteenth century brought traders and missionaries in this region. Soon, the Russian advances across Siberia to the Manchurian borders in the seventeenth century broke the relative isolations of China and set in motion a series of changes. By mid-nineteenth century, the direct East-West contact caused a head-on-collision between the two in the form of Sino-British wars. This entire period from the sixteenth century coincided with the rise of the Manchus and the establishment of Ch'ing dynasty. The characteristics of this period became markedly different from the earlier ones. At the same time it should be noted that although the Chinese meeting with the Europeans began in the sixteenth century, its effects did not assume significance till the nineteenth century when wide ranging political, administrative and economic reforms were introduced in China to face the challenges of western imperialism.

Historians hold two divergent views on whether the sixteenth century or the nineteenth century should be regarded as the beginning of modern China. One school of historians regard the Opium War of 1839-42 as the point of departure as this was the beginning of foreign imperialism and that the Chinese set in motion a series of reforms to modernise in order to face the foreign threat. This is also the time in Japan for Meiji reforms that transformed Japan into a strong modern nation. The second school of historians consisting primarily the Chinese scholars, consider the arrival of European explorers and missionaries during the transition from the Ming (1368-1643) to Ching (1644-1911) as the real point of beginning. Western learning was first introduced in this period, and this intensified the process of change. The intrusion of the West can be construed as catalyst that transformed traditional China into a modern nation, although China never followed the western model of modernization based on capitalism. China never totally revamped the political structure till the Revolution of 1911 and the Chinese identity was retained and only piece-meal administrative changes were carried out. The strong centralized Chinese empire survived till 1911 but new administrative departments were created from time to time to face the new situation created by western presence. These included the creation of Li- fan *yuan* in 1638 to manage affairs concerning Tibet, Mongolia and the Western Region, the Creation of Grand Council in 1729 to centralise decision-making and the establishment of *Tsungli Yamen* in 1861 to direct foreign relations. These attempts were followed by a series of reform movements that led to the formation of modern China. The rise of Chinese nationalism was a direct product of these developments.

South Asia had a long and rich political history representing a variety of arrangements. The vast cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity made it difficult to retain a centralized structure. However, at the time of the Portuguese arrival in India, the Indian sub-continent held a special place in the trading world. The Arab merchants nominally controlled trade in the Indian Ocean but in reality the effective control was in the hands of mixed ethnic and religious groups, who participated in this extremely profitable trade that included items like cotton fabrics, silk and spices. However, inter-regional traders did not exercise any determining influence on the state administration and the Mughal rulers could not foresee the Portuguese threat in this region. The Mughal Empire of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries was one of the three largest empires of Asia. It revealed an exceptional degree of tolerance towards other cultures. Under their rule, a highly refined culture emerged representing a synthesis of Indian and Persian traditions. From the late seventeenth century, centralized state structure started disintegrating and was replaced by autonomous regional states. These political developments coincided with the rise of the English as political contenders. The entire south Asian region came under the yoke of the European powers till the middle of the twentieth century. The first wave of modernization was experienced in the nineteenth century representing broadly two streams of responses. The first approach suggested that to reach the western standards, social awareness had to be created through reform movements based on western-model- knowledge of science, technology, political thought and liberalism. The second response stressed the superiority of the ancient culture in comparison to the west, and emphasized the revival of past greatness. However, this region showed an exceptional liberal and flexible attitude in adopting western knowledge and educational models despite facing insurmountable problems like mass poverty, colonial subjugation and social disunity due to a variety of factors. The spread of national movement and the direction of political reforms under the British government helped in creating a democratic political structure in most parts of this region.

24.4.3 Changes in the Arab States

The Abbasid dynasty that lasted till 1258 had brought political, economic and cultural transformation of the Arab states. The Abbasid caliphate disintegrated into distinct political and regional entities. The common traits of them were their Islamic faith, the Arabic language and the Arabic intellectual traditions, which gradually diversified. The caliphate broke down into three major areas, and they were further divided into smaller entities. The first comprised of the old lands of Iraq and Iran and the neighbouring territories. The second centred at Egypt that controlled Syria and Palestine, while the third area was of North Africa and the Mediterranean territories extending upto parts of Spain. Like the Christian world of Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Christians and subsequently the Protestants, the Muslims in the Arab world came to have a sharp division between Sunni and Shi'tes that sometimes caused serious political consequences.

In the period of political disintegration of the Arabs, two outside powers held sway over their territories – the Ottomans and the British. The rise of Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Near East brought many Arabian territories under its subjugation. After the Middle Ages, the history of Arabs got inevitably bound with the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans established themselves in Turkey in the fifteenth century and then expanded in all directions, particularly in Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. Moving southwards, the Turks acquired Hijaz in 1517, which was ruled from Egypt by the Mamluks. While Syria and Egypt were defeated and subjugated in 1516-17, the Persian invasion in 1535 led the occupation of Baghdad. This was the beginning of a prolonged and costly struggle. Yemen became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1538. A struggle between the Sunnis (Ottomans were from this sect) and the Zaydis (a sect opposed to Sunnis) forced Ottomans to withdraw by 1635. Henceforth, the political developments came to be closely tied up with trading activities of this region.

The British contact in this region started in early seventeenth century to establish commercial relations. Aden had been an important port, located on the southwest coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It enjoyed the benefits of good anchorage facility, strategic location as it provided a link between east and west and had a direct access to the Asian and African trade routes. The discovery of the direct sea route to India in 1498 caused serious damage to the fortune of Aden. Ottoman occupation of this port worsened the situation. In 1618 the British established a factory at an alternative port- Mukha (Mokha). The Dutch and the French followed them. The British supremacy over Red Sea was established in 1763 after the Seven Years' War. From 1785, the Americans began competing with the British. Napoleon's capture of Egypt in 1798 was an epoch-making event in many ways. It marked the beginning of the break with the past. He brought to Cairo an Arabic press, which became *Matba'at Bulaq*, the official printing institution of the government for propaganda. He also established *académie littéraire* with a library. Till this time the people of the Arab world were generally leading a self-contained, conventional life. This was an abrupt encounter with the west outside the sphere of trade that kindled an intellectual spark. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the establishment of autonomous and westernized dynasty there brought many Syrian and Lebanese writers seeking freer environment, making Egypt the centre of Arabic Renaissance. This *Annahdah al-Adabiyah* was a literary movement of the nineteenth century, aimed at creating modern Arabic literature. It was inspired by their western contacts. After the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire following the Second World War, this movement spread to the other Arab countries. It also activated the British, who till now had confined themselves to trade and political relations. The Arab response reflects a state of paradox- resisting the political domination of the west while accepting the European ideas and their techniques. The most important of these ideas were – nationalism, democracy and the principle of self-determination. The Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831-40) was another milestone in this direction. Arab nationalism started from a wide base- the entire population of this region was seen as a part of one nation. The Syrians started an intellectual movement deriving ideas from the west. In the Arab states, political intervention took the form of mandates: the British established their control over Palestine and Iraq while the French controlled Syria and Lebanon. Later local interests and responses led to fragmentation of the Arab lands into smaller nations, beginning with Saudi Arabia in 1927 till the British withdrawals in 1960s and 70s. Their break with the political past had been quite radical and the transformation to modern state different from the west.

24.5 TRADING ACTIVITIES

Trading activities increased to a new level during the period of transition to Modern World. Growth of maritime trade was the main feature of the inter-continental trade. East Asia and the Arab World contributed and participated in this process.

24.5.1 Emergence of Europe as the Centre of World Trade

The beginning of modern trading activities and the enlargement of commercial economy were closely linked with the fifteenth century maritime activities by way of geographical explorations and search of unknown lands. Till this time the European states did have trade links with Asia via overland transport. Spices such as pepper, cinnamon, mace, etc. as well as silk and cotton pieces were bought from the east, from India and beyond, and trans-shipped to Europe by the Italian merchants. Similarly, some regions of Africa sent gold and precious stones in exchange for European goods. The rise of Ottoman Empire in the eastern parts of Europe in the fifteenth century caused problems for the overland trade routes to Asia. This fact along with the religious wars between the Christians and the Muslims leading to Crusades against the latter led to vigorous search for new sea routes to Asia. The Portuguese and the Spaniards provided the lead in these ventures. The year 1492 marks the discovery of America by Columbus and the beginning of the world of two hemispheres and became a key step towards the circumnavigation of the globe. The importance of Christopher Columbus is not that he discovered America. His discovery from the European perspective is valuable because it marks the first stage of global integration that proved most beneficial for the Europeans. And when in 1498 Vasco da Gama successfully found a new sea route to India with the help of an Arab navigator — Iben Mejid, the beginning was made of the European imperialism in Asia and Africa. Magellan was the first to circum-navigate the earth and proved that oceans are not hindrance but facilitator to journeys.

The building of trade linkages and sea routes connecting different parts of the world made Europe the centre of the emerging world economy. Oceanic trade became the most popular means of transporting goods from one continent to another. Not only the volume of international trade grew enormously, the commodity pattern altered drastically. These sea journeys for economic gains proved a turning point in human history. The discovery of silver mine at Potosi in Central America by the Spaniards had global repercussions. The navigational superiority of the Europeans with their use of firearms in trading activities led to their domination of the global trading network. Trade acted as a tool of expansion and helped in the creation of modern world.

The European transformation proceeded through a diversified path. Some changes were of swift and abrupt nature, while others were gradual incorporating the old and the new to produce new ways of life. In immediate terms, the long distance trade contributed to the shipping industry and provided immense stimulus to the merchant marines. Historians like Fernand Braudel, Immanuel

Wallerstein, Eric R. Wolf, etc., have highlighted the significance of population migrations after this period. While the scope of migration to Africa and Asia hardly existed as they were already well populated, the vast tracts of American land and the West Indies provided plenty of opportunities to those who wished to seise them. A large number of Portuguese went to Brazil while lakhs of Spaniards went to Central and South America and the West Indies. This was followed by an exodus from the continent consisting of the Dutch, the English, the French and the Germans to North America and Canada. They all left for various reasons; to exploit the new riches, to participate in trade, to make fortune in the new lands, to enhance their social status, to escape the tyrannical rules and oppressive religion while the missionaries moved out to proselytize their religion.

The arrival of the Europeans in America led to an exchange of crops and diseases, what Alfred W. Crosby terms as 'biological consequences'. The exchange of plants and animals led to a globalization of biology. Europe's discovery of the new regions altered the nature of trade between Europe and the New World. Colonial trade brought new agricultural products to Europe which were rich in diet value, such as potatoes, tomatoes, cocoa, tobacco, maise, peanuts, vanilla, rubber and kidney beans. You can visualize how these must have transformed the food content of the Europeans and subsequently of the other regions of the world, where these were introduced and became items of daily consumption. Maise and potato were the two crops that solved the problem of feeding the growing population to some extent. The arrival of many new crops and their adaptation and dispersal to other climatic zones had important nutritional results. The course of adaptation was very slow as taste had to be cultivated for these. While potato became one of the staple crops in some parts of Europe, maise gradually replaced rye and millet. Tomato, another American vegetable changed the menu of the people all over the world. Products of daily consumption were exchanged from one region to another. Asian rice, ginger and pepper reached the New World, as did tea and coffee. Population migrations also resulted in the exchange of diseases in both directions. While yellow fever and probably syphilis affected Europe, small pox, measles, chicken pox, and bubonic plague spread to other regions. The spread of small pox caused heavy demographic losses in the New World after its first appearance in 1518. A historian describes this as 'bacteriological warfare'. The exchange of animals between the two worlds proved beneficial to both. On the other side, the inhuman consequences associated with the European expansion were quite glaring. Slave trading was one such result. Thousands of Africans and some Asians were bought through agents, often kidnapped and beaten up and taken to unknown lands away from their families forever. The exploitation of the Blacks and Amerindians caused a sharp decline of their populations. Many of them died in the course of sea journeys or due to alien conditions. It is estimated that nearly 11 million slaves were exported between 1500 and 1800. Strong protests were made against such practices after the spread of enlightened ideas during the eighteenth century.

The discovery of new routes and new territories not known by the Europeans resulted in the widening of knowledge of geography and cosmography, although the Arabs knew some of this. Many of the centuries old views and theories were proved wrong such as the shape of earth or the problem of distances. New literature that began to appear on these subjects helped the process of unifying the world. The expansion of world trade on the one hand promoted commercial economy based on exchange and thereby led to the rise of bourgeoisie and on the other hand, acted as the external dissolvent agent for feudalism. Although, some historians reject the notion of treating sixteenth century marking a qualitative shift from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production, we can argue that there was a vast extension and the broadening of the world-system during this period of what had been slowly going on in the earlier period. There was an acceleration of trading and commercial activities and a shift in the mode of production beginning in the sixteenth century that was increasingly moving in the capitalist direction (except in Russia and China, where it went beyond capitalism to pursue the socialist path by twentieth century).

24.5.2 Trade Structure in East Asia

China had kept herself aloof from the West for all these years in respect of trade relations though the Chinese goods were reaching Europe via Levant through the Arabs. At the time of Marco Polo's seventeen years stay in China in 1270s, substantial quantities of Chinese silk, textiles, porcelains and other items of trade reached parts of Asia, East Africa, the Middle East, Mediterranean and even coastal Europe partly by sea routes and partly through caravans. However, these commercial contacts were greatly reduced and there was a contraction of commercial activities between the early fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries affecting the entire Eurasia. Marco Polo left such a glowing description of the Asian wealth and luxuries that it drew the attention of many sea voyagers and traders including Columbus. The Chinese political troubles of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and economic crisis were on the wane when the Europeans were discovering new sea routes to Asia and America. The Chinese goods were highly prised in the European and the Middle Eastern markets. The Portuguese entry into the Indian Ocean and their trading settlements in Asia gave them greater accessibility to the market. The Chinese porcelain was now reaching Lisbon and Antwerp in plenty. The Dutch also started importing large quantities of Chinese luxury goods during the seventeenth century. The Chinese showed no inclination to buy the European manufactured goods and the only commodity in which they were interested was silver. The pressure of rising population, the growing monetary problems, increasing dependence on silver as a medium of exchange and significant decline in domestic production in China were the chief factors that made her to take up silver import from the West.

The government in China strictly controlled trade. It seems that some relaxations were made in state policy towards trade during the fifteenth century to encourage silver mining in the Chinese empire, although it failed to increase production. However, developments outside China had substantial bearing on her economy. Between 1460 and 1530, production in the silver mines of Central Europe increased by almost 500 per cent. This stimulated and sustained economic activities in Western Eurasia. This became an important place for the purchase of oriental luxury goods, particularly the Chinese. European silver was reaching China through this route. A little later, discovery of silver mines in Central and South America greatly increased international circulation of silver bullion. This led to the formation of three major routes through which silver started reaching Asia: (a) from Acapulo on the west coast of Mexico to Manila in the Philippines, (b) from the Spanish colonies in America to Portugal and through the Portuguese traders it reached Asia, (c) the other European countries like the Dutch, the English and the French also carried vast quantity of silver to purchase Asian products. In the meantime, the political unification of Japan brought about in the period of Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries greatly augmented silver production in Japan. Trade between China and Japan caused a large influx of silver into China and the Portuguese also participated in this trade and thereby increased its volume. The Portuguese entry into China at Macao (1557) through Malacca opened the door for the British, the Dutch and the French. On the other hand, the expansion of trade between Spain and Manila proved beneficial to the Chinese as it led to a steady increase of import of her silk by the New World. It also opened up opportunities of population migrations to the centress of mining in Mexico. At the same time, foreign trade and silver imports created problems for the Chinese. Although the chronic shortage of precious metal could not be solved, these imports contributed to the process of urbanization and caused frequent monetary fluctuations and business speculation. Though the foreign trade never ceased, its volume declined considerably till the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the favourable balance of trade was reversed with the coming of the British, who began selling opium as a substitute of silver. Henceforth, an aggressive form of trade as conducted by the western powers, became a threat to the Chinese establishment. This marks the phase of western imperialism in China. Chinese response, like many other regions facing a similar situation, was to pursue a programme of modernization – adopting western science and technology but retaining her culture. Thus, international trade became a catalyst of change.

24.5.3 Trading Activities of the Arabs

The Arabs had successfully linked the two most prosperous trading zones of the medieval world – the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. In the Middle Ages the bulk of the sea-borne trade between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean passed through the Red Sea. The trade belt had shifted alternately a number of times between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea mainly due to disturbed political conditions. Cairo emerged as an important centre of trade and manufacturing. In this period Egypt maintained active trade relations with the Italian states. On the East African coast, Egypt and Persia were strong maritime states but both did not maintain permanent fleets in the Indian Ocean. Ming China was more powerful but the Chinese had started withdrawing from this region. The coming of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean caused a breach in the Arab maritime domination although it did not come to a complete end at least till the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1513, the Portuguese governor of Goa, Albuquerque failed to breach the strong walls of Aden, the chief entrepot at the mouth of the Red Sea. Later he was able to capture Ormuz on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf. The Portuguese policy was to forge an alliance with Persia against the Ottoman Empire exploiting the religious differences between the two. The Portuguese set up naval bases instead of undertaking the policy of territorial conquests and developed a network of ancillary trades. They did not create new trade routes in Asia as the Europeans had done in the New World. Asian trade routes in the Indian Ocean had existed for centuries linking East Africa, Arab coast, India, Southeast Asian islands and the Chinese coast. The Portuguese first participated in it and then established their dominance with the help of their naval strength. They can be called the first worldwide traders who opened up Asian oceanic trade for rest of the European nations. After the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, the Arab trade moved towards the west. With the decline of the Italian silk industry and the contraction of the Chinese trade, the demand for Iranian silk grew. Since the mid-fourteenth century, Tabriz was the trade emporium of Asian goods and had replaced Baghdad and the other cities of this region but changing conditions made Basra an important silk centre. Gradually, the Arab region lost its place in the world trade till the construction of Suez Canal in the nineteenth century. Its importance suddenly increased with the discovery of the oil mines, which became instrumental in the creation of modern trade system.

24.6 ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION – CHANGES IN TRADE, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The emergence of modern world economy from the sixteenth century with new trade routes and massive growth of trade volume had a profound impact on the European economy. The arrival of bullion from the New World brought about a fundamental change in the balance of European society. It resulted in rapid progress of capitalism and a spirit of enterprise in trade and manufacturing sectors. Population growth caused increasing urbanization that created more demand for industrial products. The structure and trade also underwent significant changes to handle an increasing demand. With this, the financial activities multiplied. All these factors pushed Europe towards the modern era.

Trade expansion was going on throughout the fifteenth century. The opening out of commercial economy led to changes in the form of trade organizations. In late medieval period, trade was organized either by individuals or in the form of family partnership. In Italy the business organizations like *commendas* or societas were short-term ventures limited to single journey or a very brief period. Increased volume of trade necessitated changes in trade management. The regulated companies like Merchant Adventurers of England emerged in the late medieval period. Many others like the Eastland Company, the Levant Company, the Muscovy Company, etc., were assigned specific regions to carry out trade on monopolistic lines. These were followed by formation of the joint stock companies. These enjoyed several advantages such as permanent character, greater financial resources through public shares, and a corporate form of functioning. A large number of these companies came into existence by the seventeenth century in different states of Europe, such as the Dutch East India Company or *Oost Indische Compagnie*, The English East India Company, the Mineral and Battery Works Company in England, the Compagnie des Indes or the French East India Company.

The rise of exchange economy on international scale began to change the structure of markets. The transition from a largely self-sufficient medieval economy to a well-developed exchange economy led to the emergence of permanent market structures in place of weekly bazaars or fairs. A number of functionaries appeared performing specialized market operations like retail trading, storage, brokerage and so on. New trading towns were getting linked to each other with postal services, newspapers and trade information. The nature of banking operations started changing from the stage of merchant banker family activities of the medieval Italy and Germany to the level of public banking. Several such banks were established in Venice, Milan, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Nuremberg. These banks had their roots in medieval period. Greater banking facilities led to the adoption of new methods of financial transactions. It marked the coming of

Commercial Revolution in Europe from the late sixteenth century. The Italians had already devised a number of credit instruments like promissory notes, letters of credit, bills of exchange and commercial practices such as the book-keeping system, the double-entry methods of accounting and the insurance system. From the sixteenth century, the rest of Europe on a much larger scale adopted these methods of credit instruments. Negotiability of credit instruments became an important feature of commercial transactions by the seventeenth century. Trading risks during long sea voyages increased manifold with the expansion of trading network and this popularized the concept of insurance. From the fifteenth century, the Italian merchants worked out maritime insurance but later it was extended to other fields of business activities. An increasing need of capital for the purpose of investments in trade and manufacturing led to the creation of stock exchanges in many parts of Europe. The stock exchange of Amsterdam made significant advances not only in terms of scale but also in terms of organization. In the words of Fernand Braudel, these stock exchanges became the meeting place of bankers, merchants and businessmen, currency dealers, brokers and investors. They introduced modern concept of financial dealings. They also reflect an element of sophistication in the money markets.

From the late fifteenth century started a proper integration of economic activities — agriculture, trade and industry. While many of the traditional crafts continued and expanded, several new industries developed such as those of glass manufacturing, copper, brass, paper and the most important of all, the textiles. Although, the technology took a long time to change, the nature of organizing these manufacturing activities underwent steady changes. The Black Deaths and economic recession had resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural income. The most important development was the decline of medieval craft guilds in some parts of Europe and the setting up of the rural cottage industry in England, Holland, France and Germany. This was to avoid the strict regulations of the guilds that resulted in high cost of production with no corresponding increase in productivity. The rural industries took advantage of lower wages and cheaper waterpower and produced cheaper and affordable textiles for the ordinary people. Slowly the putting-out system was adopted at the expense of guilds. This is called the phase of proto-industrialization that led to the formation of modern industries.

Similarly, coal mining made rapid strides at a time when the mounting pressure of population and shortage of wood was experienced in Europe. Subsequently, the iron industry developed with improvements in technology. This paved the way for industrial revolution, which had serious consequences not only on the European economy but also affected the entire world through imperialism and market forces.

24.7 CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION – SCIENCE, RELIGION AND SOCIETY

In this section, we will provide a brief overview of the contribution of China, Arab World and Europe in the cultural transformation.

China

The Chinese civilization was among the first to develop science and technology to suit social needs. The mechanical appliances included the south-pointing carriage. They developed kites which arrived in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. Matches, the Chinese invention of 577 A.D. also reached Europe at around sixteenth century. Folding umbrella, the wheelbarrow, navigational knowledge including compass, printing (wood block printing as different from machine printing of Europe), the art of making paper and gunpowder were all- important developments. The Chinese had made astonishing astronomical observations much before the Europeans. They regularly observed novas and supernovas as early as 1006 A.D. They were the first to systematically catalog the stars. Their geographers made some of the earliest accurate maps based on grid system, much earlier than the Europeans. The same discoveries reached Europe and revolutionized the Western European society but in China it made only a modest impact. For example, printing immensely contributed to the spread of classical humanism and the ideas of Renaissance and Reformation. In China it simply spread the traditional ideas and thereby helped in sustaining the traditional scholarly class domination. The introduction of gunpowder in Europe made castles and other medieval fortifications obsolete and thus helped to liberate Western Europe from feudal, social and political domination. However, Lynda Shaffer (in *Readings in World History*) cautions the readers against judging the Chinese history by later events in Europe. In order to find changes in China, she suggests, one must abandon the search for peculiarly European events in Chinese history. For example, printing contributed to a rebirth of classical Confucian learning and affected the political system by transforming the government administered examinations as it made available inexpensive books to the students studying for such examinations. So the extent and intensity of impact varied from one society to another, which depended on receptibility and responsiveness of each region.

With a solid economic base through trade and agriculture and the technical and scientific progress under the Sung dynasty suggested that China was on the brink of major industrialization. The entire process was delayed due to political turmoil caused by the Mongol occupation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and a strong conservative state policy thereafter.

Arab World

The rise of modern science does not mean that other civilizations were not familiar with scientific knowledge. The Arabs had seen a remarkable growth in the scientific field between 900 and 1100 A.D. A large number of institutions of higher learning were established. In Baghdad, a library of valuable manuscripts had been collected. It was the Arab mathematics, which is believed to have created algebra. They borrowed concept of numerical from India which in turn was taken to Europe by scholars and came to be called the Arab numerals. Al-Khwarizmi was their renowned mathematician. Mathematics was used in the study of astronomy and in commerce, as the Arabs were great traders. They set up observatories and achieved greater accuracy than the Greeks. Their contributions in alchemy and chemistry are well known. Medicine was another well-developed field in the Islamic world. Al-Razi was perhaps the greatest physician of the Arab world who wrote several monographs including a treatise on small pox and measles. Arab's contribution to science, technology and culture was no less than that of the Europeans and this makes Ameer Ali to describe them as "the vanguard of civilization". The Europeans acquired a great deal of their scientific knowledge from the countries of the Caliphate, which had been filtered through Spain, when the Arabs conquered the latter. The

IGNOU THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Arab people were known for their expertise of navigation science, shipbuilding and cartography. They enjoyed an immense geographical advantage of being situated halfway between the Far East and Europe. Consequently they enjoyed a lucrative maritime trade as they had invented a number of mariner's instruments, which came to Europe much later. They had important centres of manufacturing – silk and cotton goods in Egypt and Damascus, luxury garments in Yemen and Mosul, carpets in Khurasan and Armenia and coloured glass industry in Syria from whom the Venetians learnt of this art to become world famous. In many fields of science, the Arabs became the teachers of later western scholars, particularly in the astronomy, arithmetic and algebra, some of which they themselves borrowed from India.

The geographical location of the Arab world enabled them to extend in all directions and led to the assimilation of the achievements of the conquered people. On the one side they became the natural heirs of Hellenistic culture that had spread throughout the Near East, the Persian Empire and Egypt. On the other side, their direct contact with Indian society and through it to the Far East enriched their trade and culture. However, all these developments slowed down after the sixteenth century. It is difficult to say whether this was due to their confrontation with the west or it was caused by internal disintegration. Possibly both these factors were at work to delay their efforts of modernization.

Europe

The European cultural transformation began with the socio-religious movements of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries — The Renaissance and the Reformation. The former was a momentous cultural movement that arose as a reaction to the medieval culture and aimed at reshaping social values. One stream of the Renaissance was Humanism, a literary movement that focused on individualism and secularism. It emphasized dignity of man and public virtues and tried to transform intellectual life by providing fresh insight to education, philosophy, history and politics. Machiavelli, the famous political thinker of that period, suggested separation of politics from religion – that forms the basis of modern political system. Though emerging in the medieval setting, the Renaissance created a new culture in Europe. Attempts were made in the later medieval period to reform the church but they had failed. The Protestant Reformation brought about a change in the religious outlook and the reformed religion removed the traditional obstacles in the path of capitalist development by encouraging thrift, worldly vocation or 'calling', as the reformers called it and sanctioning the charging of interest on productive loans. This new attitude cleared the way for capitalism and enterprise.

As regards the gender relations, the social status of women in the medieval society for majority of them was hedged about with legal limitations and indignities. A man could divorce, even kill his wife for adultery, witchcraft or theft and remarry but this right was not with the wife. A good number of women belonging to the ordinary section of the society, whose marriage could not be arranged for various reasons, entered convents. But unlike their male counterparts, they could not move up in the church hierarchy. The position of the aristocratic women was relatively better. Humanist movement and Reformation recognized the need of providing elementary education to women but it was not meant to widen their intellectual horizon but simply to enable them to read Bible and be good wives and good mothers. The competition among the artisans due to the growth of market economy adversely affected the position of women. They were often excluded by the guilds. From the late Middle Ages till the seventeenth century, women, particularly the widows and spinsters, were subjected to the most abhorring practice of witchcrafts. They were considered morally weaker and hence an easy prey to devil's enticements. The widespread practice of witchcraft is seen as the last chapter of the medieval world. The spread of scientific thought brought an end to it. The spread of proto-industrialization saw the beginning of improvement of their plight. However, women continued to struggle for their political rights and gender equality throughout the twentieth century. Modern world for them started much later.

The greatest achievement of the Europeans was in the sphere of modern science. A series of discovery and inventions, some of them accomplished with the aid of Asian knowledge of science, transformed social climate and created modern attitudes to the world. No doubt, the Arabs had preserved the Greek natural philosophy and carried out translations, while the Chinese invented technological devices but it was only in Europe that a true integration of observation, experimentation and formulation of scientific laws could take place, based on mathematical application. A mechanical picture of world was created, which was free from divine intervention. This came to be called Scientific Revolution. It was the work of not only a handful of Scientists but also numerous institutions, including some scientific academies that created a social environment for scientific activities. The role of Rene Descartes and Sir Francis Bacon deserve special mention for developing scientific method to spread scientific and rational spirit among the people. Copernicus, Keppler and Newton successfully destroyed the Aristotelian view of the world that had dominated the European mind for almost thirteen centuries and replaced it by the modern scientific view. It was this rapid progress in the field of science that laid the real foundations of the modern world.

24.8 NEW METHODS OF WARFARE

The Economic level is reflective of the state of technology. The medieval warfare was based more on the strength of the army and individual bravery rather than on technological knowledge. The medieval period witnessed building of fortress-like castles by the feudal nobility to meet the military needs. These proved effective so long as the military technique was confined to simple warfare. The introduction of catapult led to the replacement of wooden structures by stone castles. The introduction of gunpowder totally negated the advantages which the warrior aristocracy had enjoyed till now. Gunpowder was a Chinese invention but in Europe it assumed a deadly character and had a devastating impact. The Chinese were producing it with Saltpetre, sulphur and crushed charcoal from the ninth century. According to the well-known historians, the Chinese cannon in the early fifteenth century was equal or superior to the one used in Europe. However, in the subsequent period, Europe took the lead. It caused panic in the land of its origin when the Europeans used the improved version in the sixteenth century. The Chinese had failed to develop and prepare herself to war exigencies. New type of weapons such as artillery and the improved version of heavy canons (first employed around 1330) revolutionized the nature of military warfare in Europe by the fifteenth century. The development of corned gunpowder in about 1420 provided an advantage of instant combustion. Two important conflicts of medieval Europe were decided in 1453 due to the use of heavy artillery. In the Hundred Years' War, the French used it to drive out the English from France and to recapture Bordeaux. The Ottoman Turks also used heavy artillery to capture Constantinople. The employment of cannon made the old form of feudal warfare redundant as its heavy cost could not be borne by individual nobles. Henceforth, the advantage passed on to national rulers who had all the financial resources at their command and their own permanent army.

The large-bore and mobile artillery capable of following the swift movements of the troops made its appearance in the fifteenth century. It was first carried on oxen but in the Spanish war in Italy in 1494 it was drawn on powerful horses. No city could survive its onslaughts easily. With the passage of time, constant improvements were carried out. Naval artillery was introduced in the period of early colonial empires during the sixteenth century. The growing threat of privateers in the high seas forced all vessels to equip artillery on the ships with expert gunners to fire them. Many other weapons were devised such as arquebuses, muskets and rifles. These weapons transformed inter-state warfare and led to the adoption of aggressive policy of territorial expansion. The Europeans used cannons in their ships in quest for overseas expansion. It was with these weapons they conquered almost the entire central and South America and carried out settlements in the West Indian islands. It was not merely the use of these weapons but its production on a massive scale, the availability of capital to sustain it and constant endeavor of the Europeans to use scientific knowledge for its improvement that gave them a distinct edge over the rest of world. The successful control over a large part of the globe was achieved because of this armed superiority. Warner Sombart talks of the new kind of war, rejuvenated by technology, the midwife of modern times, hastening the establishment of capitalist systems.

24.9 WHY EUROPE TRIUMPHED?

The rise of modern Europe owes a great deal to the outside world. Historians emphasize the role of technology in bringing about the European domination. A series of inventions and discoveries in the later medieval period, some of these borrowed from the Eastern civilizations, created a fresh climate for change. The Chinese achievements cannot be doubted in the field of technology but these breakthroughs could not be followed up at a desirable pace as had happened in Europe. Moreover, the relative geographical isolation of the Chinese from the western world kept these inventions unknown to the Europeans at least till the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Although, there were several reasons that can be cited to explain the triumph of Europe in the world system and list can easily be elongated, three factors can be regarded of crucial importance; technology, social attitude and the rise of modern science.

According to Braudel, the great technological 'revolutions' between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries were artillery, printing and ocean navigation. We have already discussed the role of gunpowder in changing the world. A series of changes in the technique of shipbuilding and improvements in the skill of map-making led to the success of the Europeans. Greater understanding of geometry and arithmetic provided the essential foundation of navigation, cartography and surveying. Maps and charts that were in use since the thirteenth century, owed

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

little to the academic science. Mathematicians and astronomers like Martin Behaim and Gemma Frisins provided theoretical basis to scientific navigation. The first recorded use of stars to estimate latitude was made in 1462 and in 1484, Abraham Zacuto prepared a table of the sun's height. Mercator's compass devised a method of projecting on a flat piece of paper an accurate picture of the curved earth. These developments were accompanied by improved version of ship designing. *Cob*s were replaced by *caravels* and *fluyts*. Another instrument of great significance was the mechanical clock. It was invented before 1300 A.D. Initially it was too expensive to be bought by individuals but after it became a common instrument of use, it began to regulate work with new precision and brought efficiency in economic life of Europe by a new emphasis on time keeping. The invention of printing press of movable type in about 1450 brought revolutionary changes in the cultural sphere. It provided readable material to the Europeans at affordable price in different countries and cities. It also ensured that ideas spread fast and authentic literature was made available to the readers. The success of the Humanist movement and the religious reformation of Martin Luther owes a great deal to the spread of printing press. It contributed to the cultural transformation of Europe and hastened the pace of change by spreading new ideas. These new concepts emanated from the social and cultural movements like the Renaissance, Reformation and the scientific discoveries. These provided an ideal mix of factors to shake up the tradition-bound society, something that was not there in China and other Non-European societies. In the subsequent period, a series of scientific discoveries and inventions gradually brought about a change in social attitude and mentality of the people. Rationality, experimentation and scientific temper became the hallmarks of the western society that broadened the geographical and intellectual horizons that brought them to the stage of modernity.

24.10 SUMMARY

Europe of the late-fifteenth century was vastly different from Europe of the mid-fourteenth century. The economy had become more complex and new patterns of trade and manufacturing were emerging and Europe was on the threshold of modernity. In this Unit, we have seen that feudal structure in some parts of Europe began to disintegrate, thereby initiating agrarian changes. The decline of feudalism led to the rise of centralized states under absolute rulers and under them conditions of capitalist development was created. Further constitutional changes and popular revolutions led to liberal democratic structures although, their nature varied from state to state. We have also seen how the new trade routes and long-distance trade contributed to the emergence of modern world system. The rise of international trade acted as a solvent of feudal system, expanded the European economy including commerce and manufacturing and pushed it in the capitalist direction. This led to the rise of bourgeois class. It acted as an instrument of change in other parts of the world. We have seen the trade structure of China and the Arabs and how that was affected by the European intrusion. The role of cultural factors in the transformation of medieval society in to modern world has been explored, emphasizing the contribution of modern science and technology. They determined the progress in the art of warfare by introducing new techniques.

24.11 EXERCISES

1) Explain the meaning of 'modern world'.
2) Why and how did the centralized states emerge in Europe?
3) Compare the European agricultural developments with those of China and the Arabs.
4) Discuss in brief the impact of international trade in different parts of the world.
5) Bring out the salient features of the European commercial transformation.
6) Evaluate the progress of China and the Arabs in the field of science. Why these could not transform their respective societies?
7) Bring out the chief features of the cultural transformation that changed Europe from medieval age to modern.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS COURSE

Amar Farooqui, *Early Social Formations*, Delhi, 2001

S. J. De Laet (ed.), *History of Humanity*, Vol. I, New York, 1994

A. H. Dani and J. P. Mohen (eds.), *History of Humanity*, Vol. II, New York, 1996

B. B. Lal and S. P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilization*, Delhi, 1984

S. Ratnagar, *Understanding Harappa*, Delhi, 2001

Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, London, 1978

Joachim Hermann and Erik Zurcher (eds.), *History of Humanity*, Vol. III, London, 1996

Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe,* 1956

Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 Vols., 1961

Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, 1946

Rodney Hilton (ede.), *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, 1976

K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Occean*, 1985

Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (eds.), *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asdia in the Early Modern Era*, 1999

M. M. Postan and Edward Miller (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Vols. II and III, 1987

Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, 1998

Braudel, F, *Civilisation and Capitalism, 15th - 18th century*, vol. I- III, London, 1982

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Carlo M. Cipola, *Guns, Sails and Empires: Technological Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion, 1400-1700*, New York, 1965.

Carlo M. Cipola (ed.), *The Fontana Economic History of Europe, The Middle Ages*, 1981

Geoffrey Scammell, *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion 1400-1715,* 1989.

Spangenburg, Ray and Moser, Diane K., *The History of Science: From the Ancient Greeks to the Scientific Revolution*, Hyderabad, 1999.

William H. McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires, 1450-1800*, 1989.

Christopher Allmond, *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. VII, c1415-c1500, 1998.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

इग्नू जन–जन का विश्वविद्यालय
ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL MEDIA

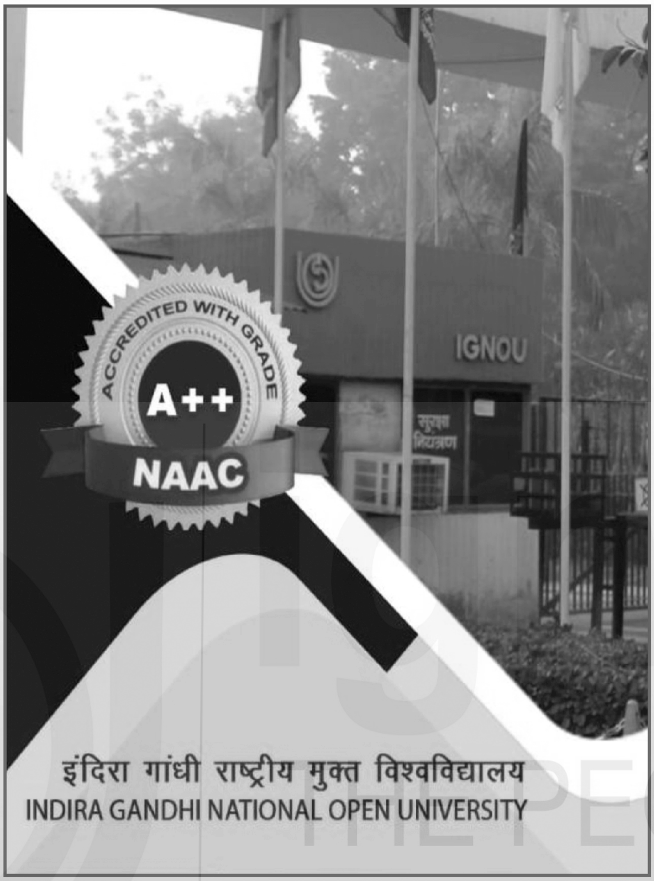
ACCREDITED WITH GRADE A++ NAAC

IGNOU DIGI NEWS

IGNOU DIGI NEWS
12th May 2022
SOET
Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Engineering and Technology
One Day Webinar
Development of Technology in India since Independence
On National Technology Day

IGNOU DIGI NEWS
12th May 2022
RC–Delhi 1
Monitoring of IGNOU-Goel, Guyana Counselling Session of DWED Programme

IGNOU DIGI NEWS
12th May 2022
RC– Mumbai
Monitoring B.Ed workshop



इंदिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय मुक्त विश्वविद्यालय
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

LIVE GYAN DARSHAN
GYAN VANI
gyandhara

YouTube LIVE
LIVE

SWAYAM PRABHA
Free DTH Channel for Education

SWAYAM PRABHA - DTH CHANNELS for Higher Education Offered by IGNOU

Channel 17	Social Sciences and Humanities
Channel 18	Basic and Applied Sciences
Channel 19	Professional and Vocational Education
Channel 20	State Open Universities (SOUs) and Teacher Education

online_admission

eGyankosh

eContent App

Www.ignou.ac.in

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

QR Code generated for quick access by Students

IGNOU website
eGyankosh
e-Content APP
Facebook (@officialPageIGNOU)
Twitter (@OfficialIGNOU)
Instagram (officialpageignou)
On line admission

Like us, follow-us on the University Facebook Page, Twitter Handle and Instagram

To get regular updates on Placement Drives, Admissions, Examinations etc.

www.ignou.ac.in

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

MPDD/IGNOU/P.O. 7.5K/May, 2023

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

ISBN: 978-93-5568-797-5